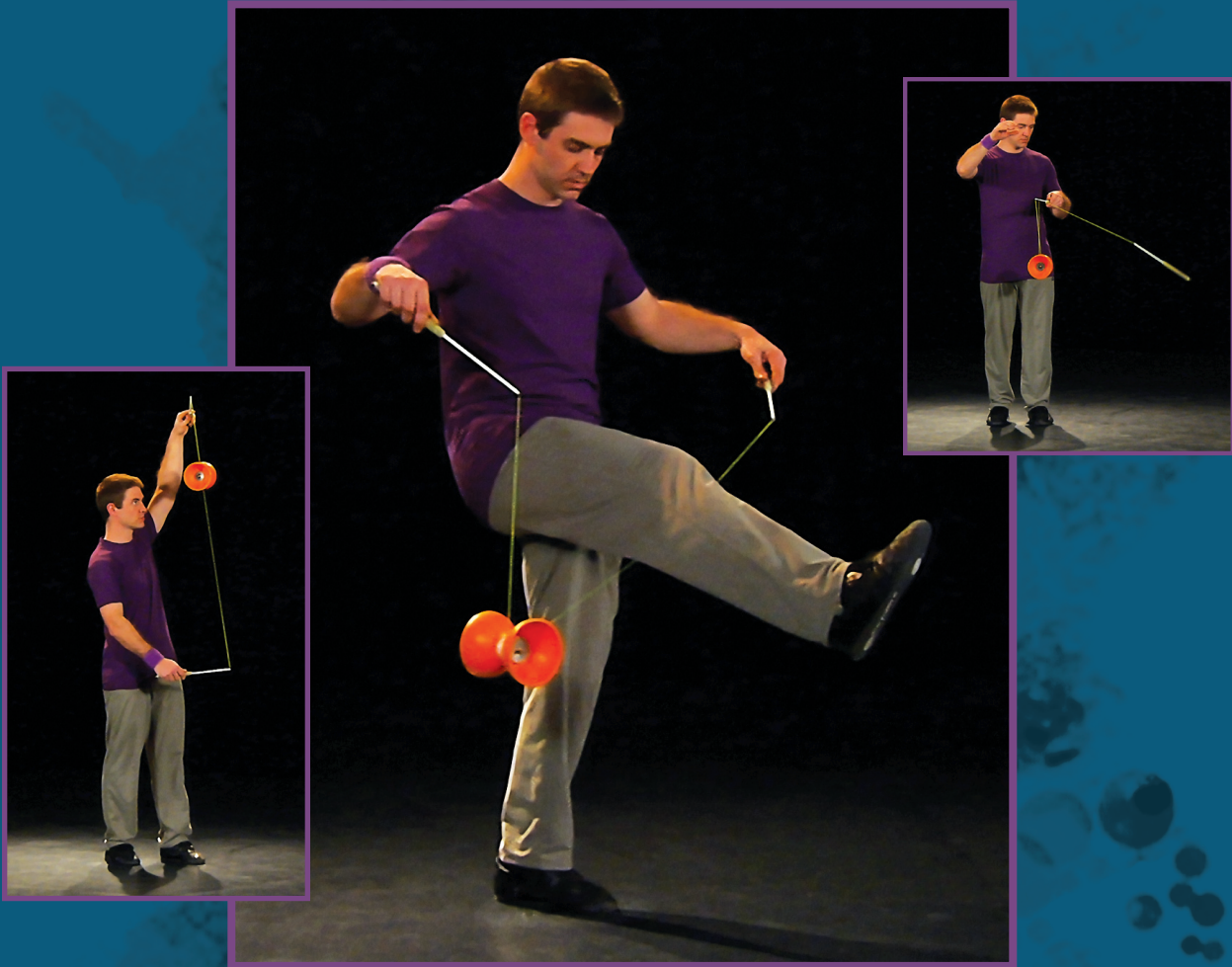


# BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



## DIABOLO



FONDATION  
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



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Legal deposit: Summer 2011

\* 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.**



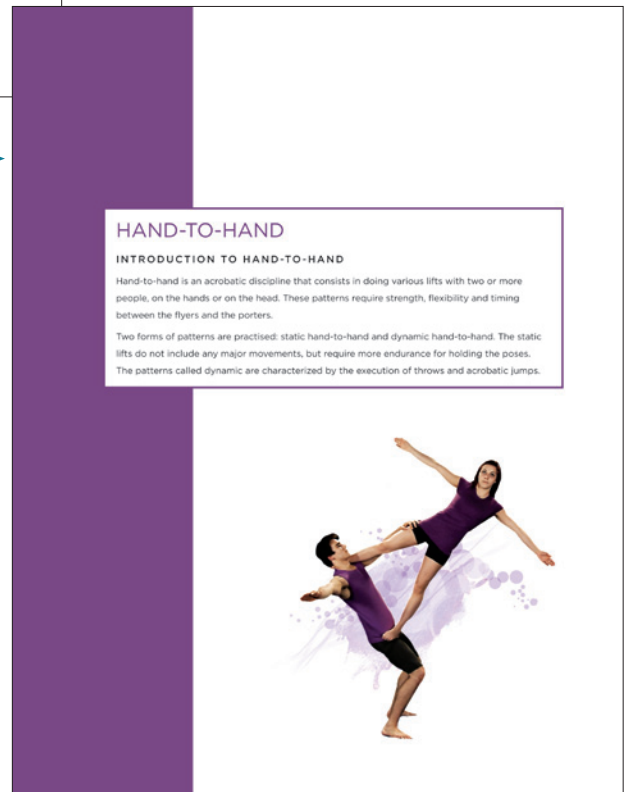
# INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



## 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





**ACROBATICS**  
**MENICHELLI**

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


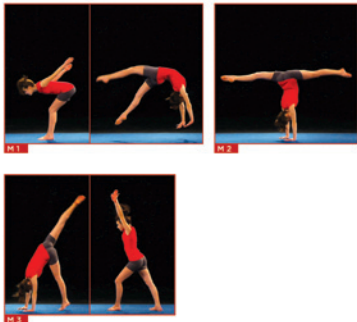
**Prerequisites**

- 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.

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

## 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.

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



**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.



**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.



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.

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



**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 bring 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.

Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant cannot lift the legs.	1. Performing strengthening exercises for the abdominal muscles. EX
2. The participant cannot keep the arms straight.	2. Turning the hands toward the outside, the index finger facing front.

**Variant**

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



Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • HANDSTAND • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

## 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.



Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant lets the free hip and leg fall and has difficulty returning the knee to the bar.	1. Keeping the hips even throughout the movement.
2. The participant stays in a pike position and has difficulty maintaining a secure knee angle.	2. Opening the hips by tightening the buttocks and pressing the pelvis forward, pulling the heels toward the buttocks.

**Variants**

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

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • FIXED TRAPEZE • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil



# INSTRUCTIONS - VIDEO DOCUMENTS

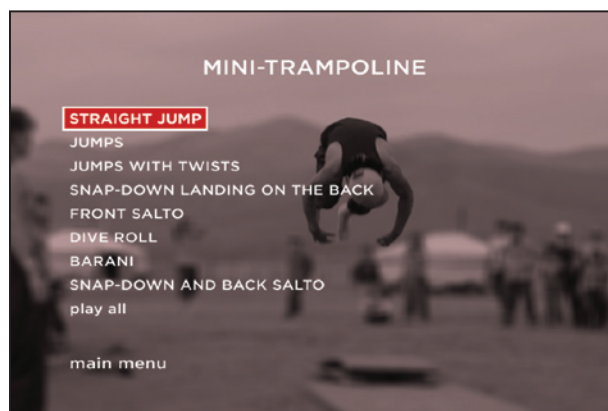


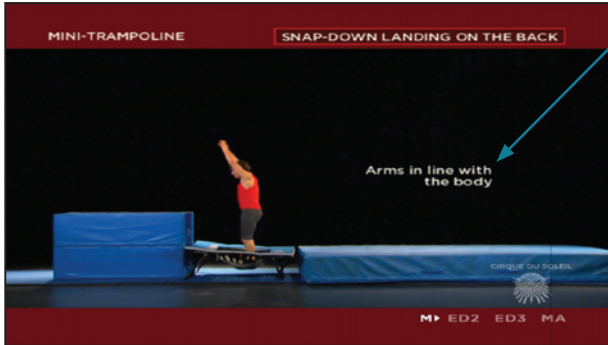
## Main Menu

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.



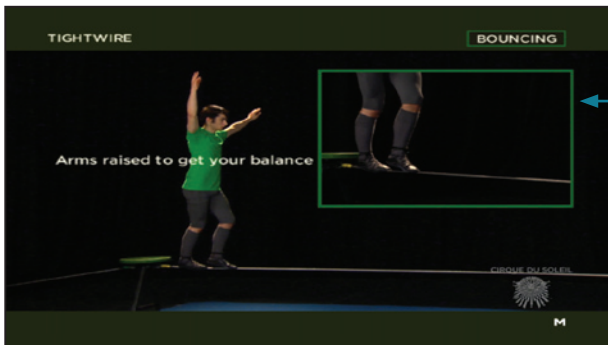


## Warnings

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.





# DIABOLO

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DIABOLO

The diabolo is a juggling discipline that consists in throwing, catching and manipulating an object made up of two cones joined by their tips with a string stretched between two handsticks. It is this gyroscopic effect that keeps the diabolo balanced on the string.

The diabolo is practised both by professional artists and amateurs. For some, it is a game, for others, an art. Today, many diabolists have mastered the manipulation of several diabolos at the same time.

Learning it contributes to the development of coordination, body awareness, a sense of rhythm, creativity and the pleasure of playing.



## TERMINOLOGY

### Axle

Central part of the diabolo. There are different axles. Wide axles make learning the diabolo easier.

### Cups

Cones or outer parts of the diabolo, which are usually made of rubber or plastic.

## EQUIPMENT

The diabolo is made up of two elements: the two handsticks with the string and the diabolo.

The length of the string varies according to the diaboloist. To define the ideal length, position one handstick laying on the ground and lift the other while tightening the string, which will then be vertical. It should reach to between the chest and the chin.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Since the majority of diaboloists are right-handed, it is preferable to start learning with the right hand. In order to simplify the text, the explanations presented in this document are given for right-handed people.





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## DIABOLO

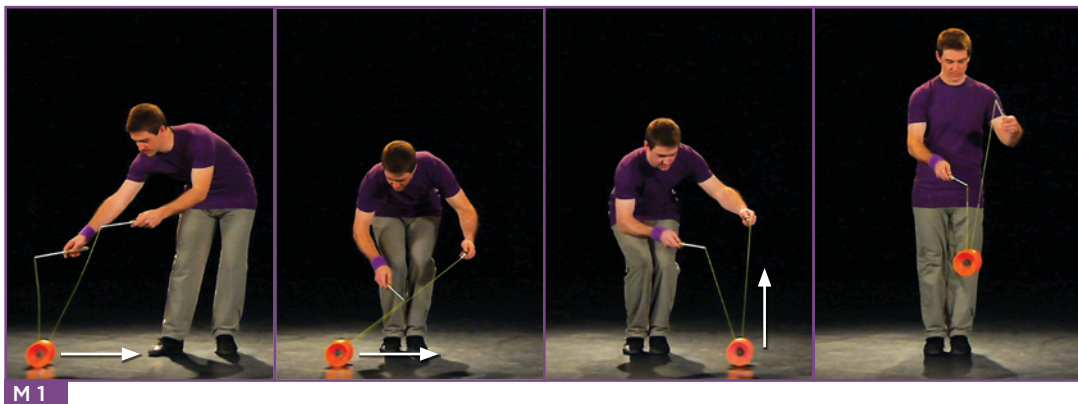
### BASIC SPINNING TECHNIQUE

#### Technical Element Description

Spinning the diabolo and correcting it to keep it balanced on the string.

#### Explanation of the Movement

- Standing, with the feet shoulder-width apart, place the diabolo on the ground to the right; make it roll by pulling the handsticks to the left. When the diabolo reaches the front of the left foot, lift the handsticks. This makes the diabolo start to spin. In order to increase this spin, make a small, quick upward movement of the right hand and repeat. The faster the spin of the diabolo, the more stable it will be and the easier it will be to perform the movements. **M 1**
- Stand facing the cup. If the diabolo moves or turns, follow it. Also, the end of the handsticks, where the string is attached, should be in the same line and the same plane as the middle of the diabolo's axle.
- While making the up and down movement to increase the spin of the diabolo, make the necessary corrections to keep it balanced.



## Educationals

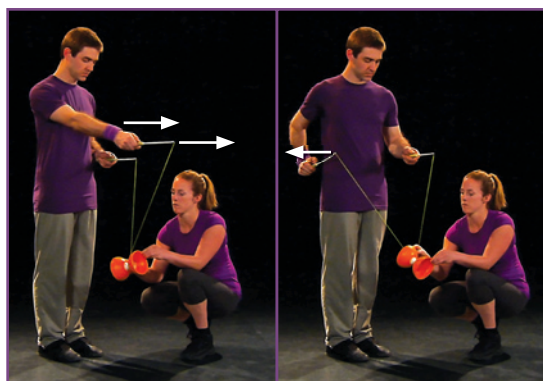
1. One person holds the diabolo with his hands and moves it so that the participant practises corrections with the handsticks. The diabolo is corrected with the hand that provides the rotation speed, that is, the right hand. While correcting it, continue to give it speed by making up-and-down movements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



## Manual Aid

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

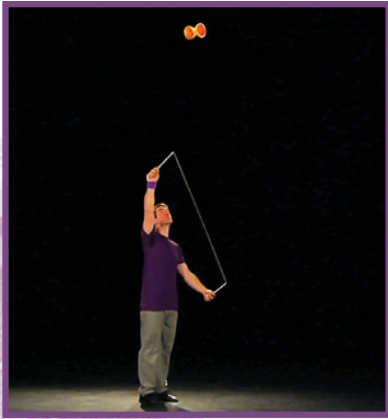
### Common Mistakes

1. From the beginning, the participant places the diabolo on the wrong side on the ground.
2. The participant is badly positioned.
3. The participant waits too long to make a correction.
4. The diabolo becomes unstable and loses speed.
5. The participant overcorrects and tips the diabolo.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

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. Staying facing the diabolo.
3. Correcting the diabolo from the first signs of instability. With practice, one will be able to anticipate corrections.
4. Always providing speed when applying the correction.
5. Making small correction movements.





## DIABOLO TOSSING

### Technical Element Description

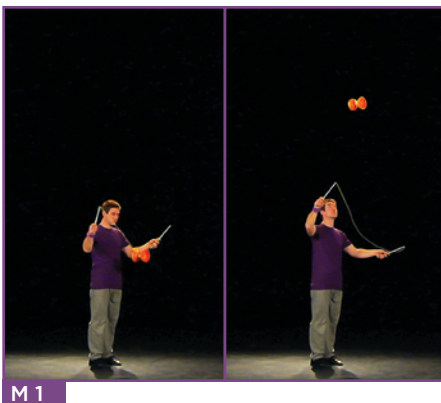
Tossing the diabolo into the air and catching it on the string.

### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

### Explanation of the Movement

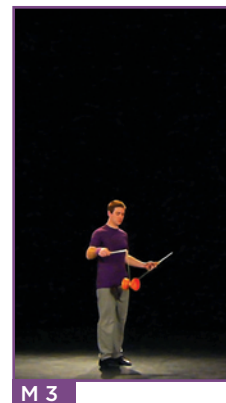
- Toss the diabolo by pulling the hands to the sides. The string will then make a trampoline effect and the diabolo will spring into the air. **M 1**
- Get into position for catching the diabolo, string tight, right hand up and left hand down. **M 2**
- Catch the diabolo on the string by aiming with the end of the right handstick. The diabolo should land on the string near the right handstick and then move to the middle. When the diabolo touches the string, bring the hands together to cushion its movement and return to the basic position. **M 3**



M 1



M 2

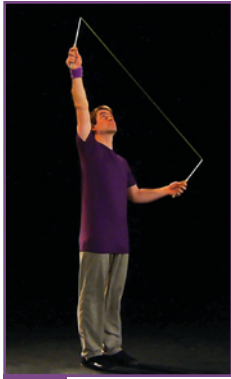


M 3

### Educationals

1. Practise the toss and catch without the diabolo. **ED 1**
2. Begin with low tosses and then increase the height little by little.
3. Always catch with the right hand. Once the exercise is mastered, practise the catch with the other hand, while paying attention to the loss of rotation speed.





ED 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant tosses the diabolo too quickly, which causes a loss of rotation speed in the air and a loss of stability when it is caught.
2. The participant tosses the diabolo too high. The catch becomes more difficult to make.
3. The diabolo bounces off the string when it is caught due to a trampoline effect.
4. The participant catches with the wrong hand.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The diabolo should have a good rotation speed before being tossed. The participant should take his time.
2. Beginning by mastering low tosses and then increasing the height little by little.
3. Cushioning the catch. Bringing the hands together when the diabolo touches the string.
4. Catching with the right hand. For future exercises, or for juggling with two diabolos, working with both hands may be an advantage, especially for making certain patterns.





## DIABOLO TRAPEZE

### Technical Element Description

Swinging the diabolo like a pendulum and making a complete turn around a handstick.

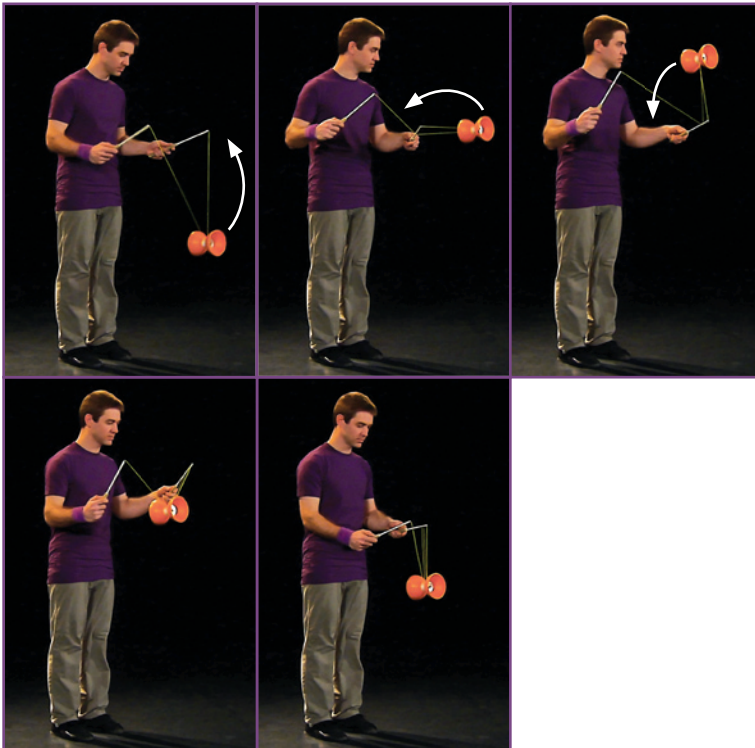
### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Swing the diabolo from right to left, like a pendulum. Continue the momentum so that the diabolo passes under the handstick and back to the top. The string should roll around the handstick. Catch the diabolo in the middle of the string. **M 1**
- To stop, pull the hands apart. The diabolo will then do the movement in reverse.

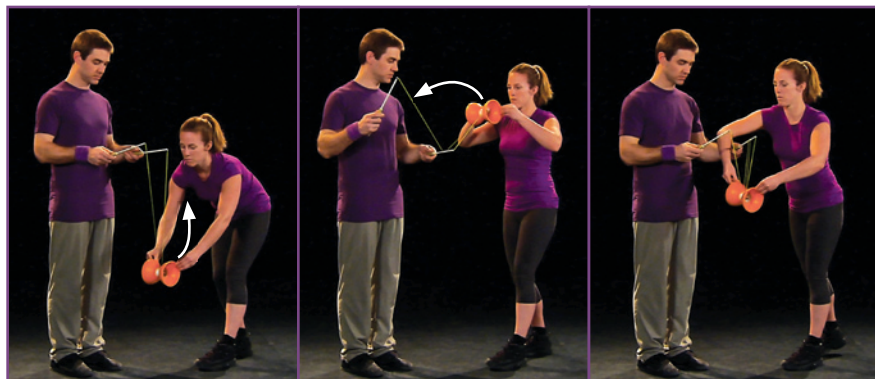
**Note:** During this pattern, the diabolo never leaves the string.



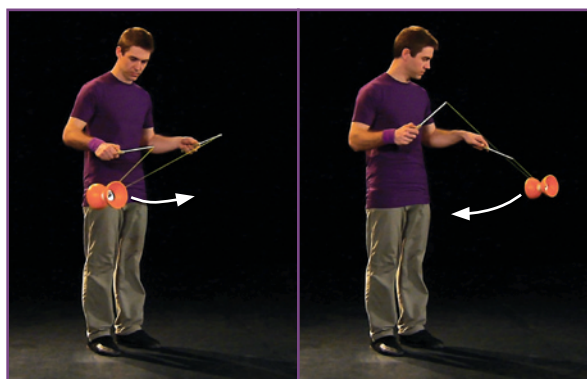
M 1

## Educationals

1. With manual aid: The instructor holds the diabolo while the participant manipulates the handsticks and executes the movement in order to fully assimilate it. **ED 1**
2. Swing the diabolo while progressively increasing the movement range. Let it pass under one handstick, then over and catch it in the middle of the string. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

### Common Mistakes

1. The diabolo does not make a complete turn around the handstick.
2. The participant fails to catch the diabolo on the string.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Tossing the diabolo harder. The diabolo has to make a complete rotation. Tossing it too far to the outside should be avoided.
2. Keeping the handsticks parallel. The end of the handsticks and the centre of the diabolo should be aligned.  
  
Doing the reverse movement to recover the pattern if the diabolo does not land on the string. Making a knot should be avoided.







## DIABOLO

### POWER-WHIP ACCELERATION

#### Technical Element Description

Accelerating the rotation speed of the diabolo by horizontal back-and-forth movements.

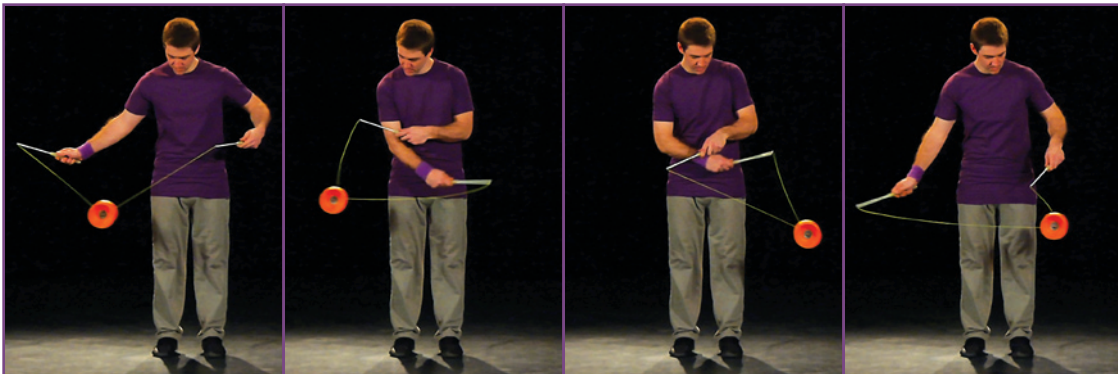
#### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

#### Explanation of the Movement

- Whip the diabolo with the right hand toward the left hand, so that the diabolo remains horizontal. Bring the diabolo to the right and whip to the left using the right hand, which provides the rotation speed. Cross the right arm under the left, then over. The diabolo should not leave the string. **M 1**

***Note:** The rotation speed of the diabolo is essential to learning new patterns. The faster the diabolo spins, the more stable it is and the more time is available to perform the patterns.*

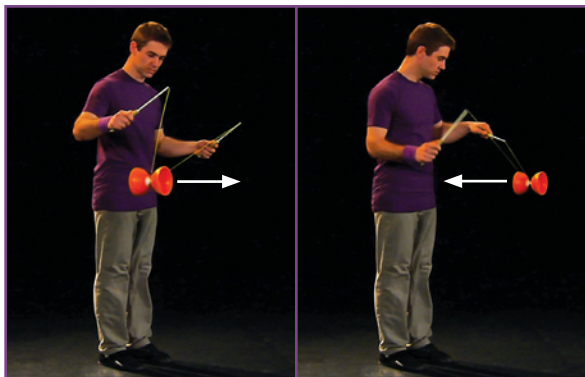


**M 1**

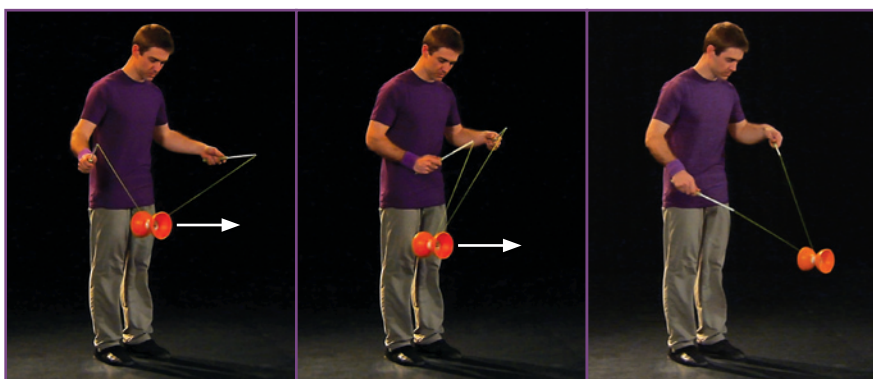
#### Educationals

1. Move the diabolo from right to left, horizontally, under the handsticks. At the beginning, the diabolo will slow down. **ED 1**
2. Make a small movement and then increase it. **ED 2**
3. Slowly increase the propelling force of the right hand.
4. Once the diabolo is whipped with the right hand, bring the hand back to the right side so that the diabolo returns to the starting position.





ED 1



ED 2

### Common Mistakes

1. The diabolo leaves the string.
2. The diabolo loses speed.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Aligning the end of the handsticks and the centre of the diabolo.
2. Bringing the diabolo back with a rapid movement of the right hand. Avoiding too much friction between the string and the diabolo. Trying the movements with different tempos.





## DIABOLO ELEVATOR

### Technical Element Description

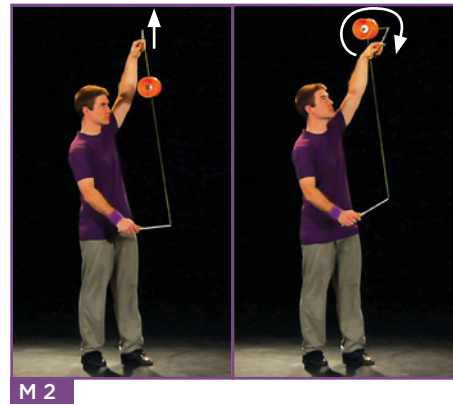
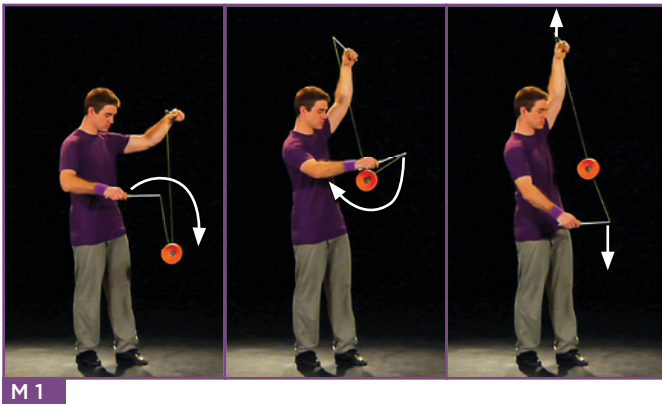
Moving the diabolo upward along the vertically stretched string.

### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

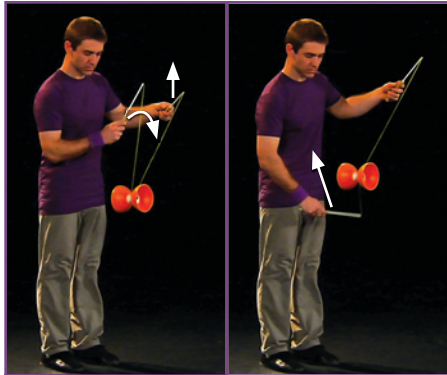
### Explanation of the Movement

- The diabolo must have a very good rotation speed. Raise the left hand and hold the right hand at hip height. The diabolo should be near the right handstick.
- Roll the string around the diabolo's axle with the right handstick passing by outside. **M 1**
- Stretch the string vertically and keep it tight. The diabolo will go up the string. **M 2**
- When the diabolo reaches the top of the string, or if it is losing too much speed, unroll the string from the diabolo's axle with the left hand and return to the basic spinning position. **M 3**

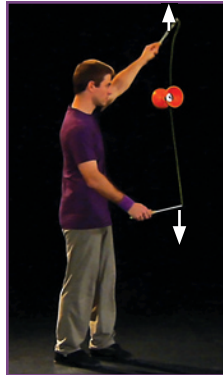


## Educationals

1. Give the diabolo some speed, roll the string around the axle with the right hand and immediately unroll the string. **ED 1**
2. Make small elevators. Let the diabolo rise slowly and unroll the string right away. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

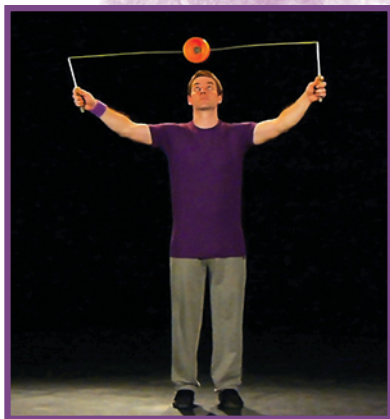
### Common Mistakes

1. The diabolo does not rise.
2. The diabolo rises but then loses speed and tips to the side.
3. The diabolo rises too quickly and makes a knot at the end.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the rotation speed or, once the string is vertical, applying more tension to the string.
2. Unrolling the string and stopping the elevator before the diabolo loses too much speed.
3. Reducing the strings' tension and replacing the string, if necessary.





## DIABOLO VARIOUS THROWS

### Technical Element Description

Tossing the diabolo and making a movement such as a full turn, half turn, skipping or bouncing the diabolo on the string.

### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.
- Tossing vertically.

## Explanation of the Movement

### Full turn

- Toss the diabolo into the air to a height of around 3 to 4 metres, and make a 360° turn and catch it.
- Reduce the height of the throws and make faster full turns. It is preferable to make the full turn by starting from the left side to be able to catch with the right hand. **M 1**

### Half turn

- Toss the diabolo into the air, make a half turn and catch it. Toss the diabolo again, make another half turn and catch it. **M 2**

**Note:** If the participant makes a single half turn, the right hand no longer provides the acceleration or makes the corrections, since the diabolo is then turning in the other direction.

### Skipping

- Toss the diabolo into the air, do a skipping movement with the handsticks and the string, and then catch the diabolo. **M 3**

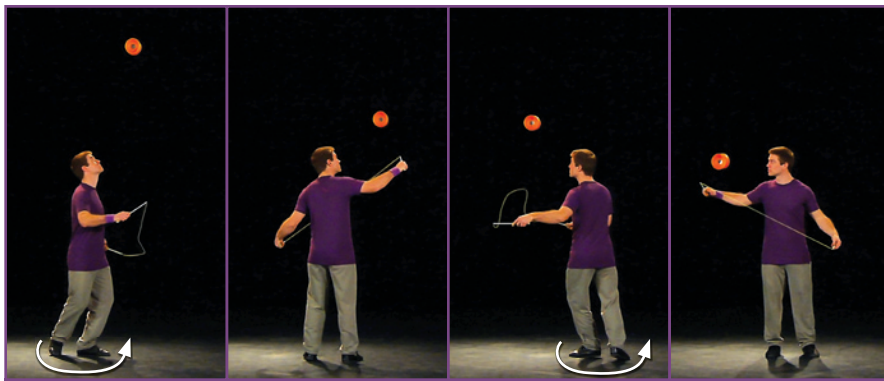
### Bounces

- Toss the diabolo into the air and catch it on the tightened string to make it bounce. **M 4**



**M 1**

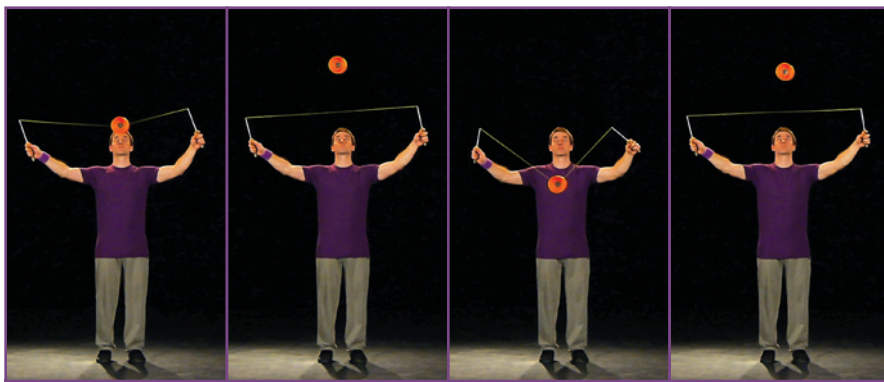




M 2



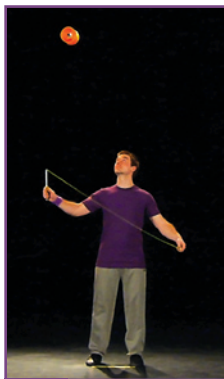
M 3



M 4

## Educationals

1. Juggle around with tosses in all their forms to different heights and with bounces. Try to catch and immediately toss again several times. **ED 1**
2. Practise precision tossing. For example, stand on a line or a mark on the ground, toss the diabolo and catch it without moving the feet. **ED 2**
3. Practise the patterns without the diabolo using only the handsticks, since it is not easy to make a good pattern. **ED 3**



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3



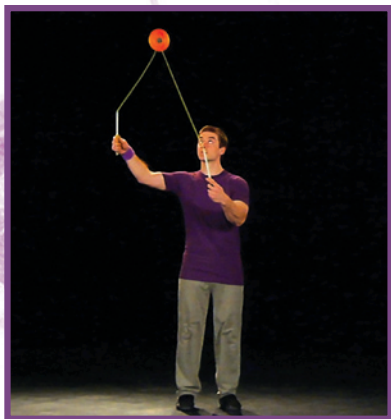
### Common Mistakes

1. At the moment of performing the pattern, the diabolo tips off the side or the back.
2. During the skipping, the participant trips over the string.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Tossing the diabolo properly and not beginning the movement too early. If the toss is good, the catch will be easier.
2. Lengthening the string to allow enough room for the skip.





## DIABOLO

### CHINESE ACCELERATION

#### Technical Element Description

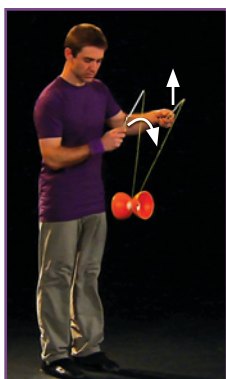
Accelerating the diabolo rotation speed by vertical back-and-forth movements.

#### Prerequisites

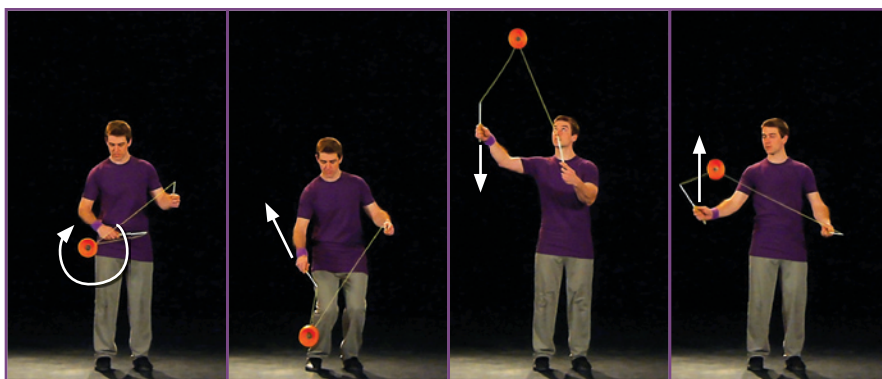
- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Roll the string around the diabolo with the right hand. **M 1**
- Propel upward with the right hand. The diabolo swings up above the handsticks and moves to the left hand.
- When the diabolo falls back down, bring it back near the right hand so as to begin the movement again. **M 2**



M 1



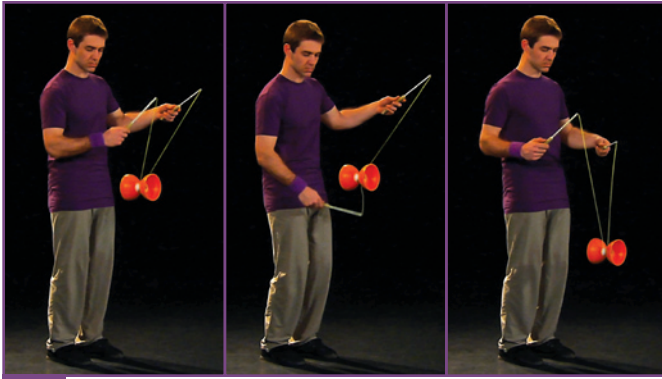
M 2

### Educationals

1. With the right hand, roll the string around the diabolo and make small up and down acceleration movements. When the diabolo is going fast enough, unroll the string with the right hand. **ED 1**
2. Repeat the exercise with more force so that the diabolo swings up above the hands. Bring the hands close one to another to avoid creating a knot. Pull the hands apart again when the diabolo falls back down.
3. Make three or four repetitions of the movement and then unroll the string.







ED 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not successfully execute the element.
2. The string gets tangled and makes a knot.
3. The participant gets impatient due to his lack of success.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Taking it one step at a time and not trying to go too fast. Beginning with small movements.
2. Always keeping the hands moving. Stopping without unrolling the string may cause the diabolo to get stuck.
3. Going on to something else if the element is not working, and coming back to it later. This pattern can be difficult to learn and requires practice, but it will quickly become an essential.





## DIABOLO THE SUN

### Technical Element Description

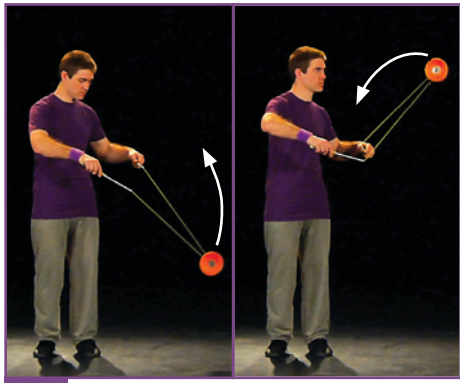
Turning the diabolo completely around the handsticks.

### Prerequisites

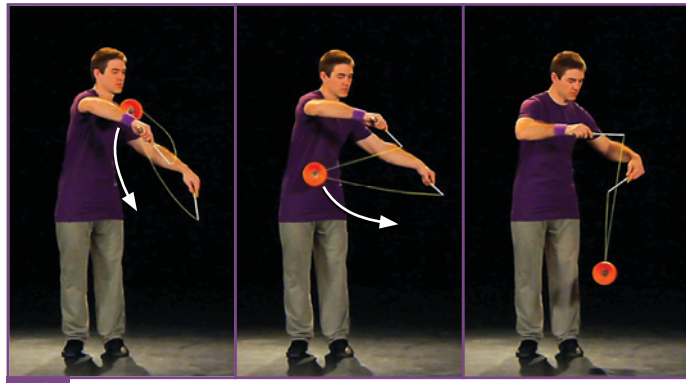
- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Sun to the left: Make a pendulum with the diabolo, the left handstick pointing up and the right handstick pointing slightly toward the participant. **M 1**
- Continue propelling the pendulum so that the diabolo makes a complete turn around the left handstick. It will go under the handstick first and then over it. The diabolo should then go between both arms to return to its initial position. **M 2**
- Sun to the right: The diabolo must turn in a clockwise direction, but the hands will be reversed: left hand pointing toward the participant, right hand pointing to the outside. The diabolo goes between the arms first, then over the right hand.



M 1

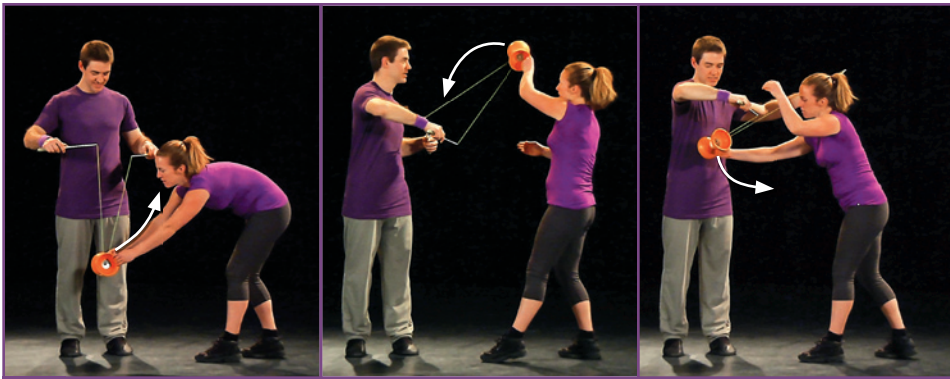


M 2

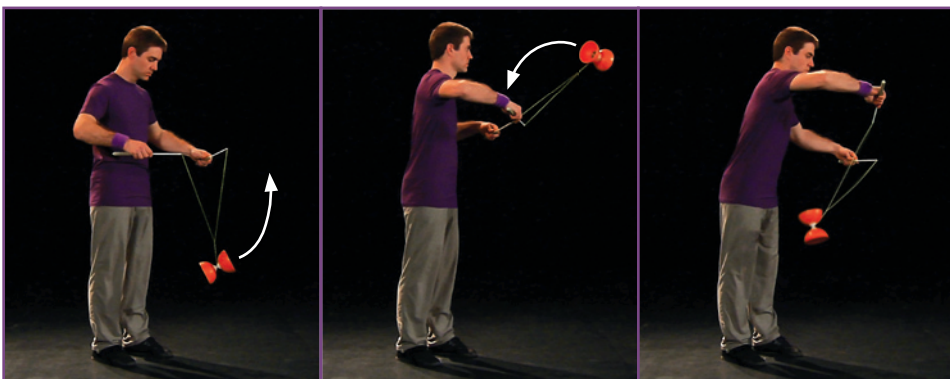
### Educationals

1. With manual aid: The instructor holds the diabolo with his hands while the participant manipulates the handsticks. **ED 1**
2. Attach the diabolo to the middle of the string and make the movement without accelerating the diabolo in order to understand the hand and arm movements. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

### Common Mistakes

1. The diablo hits the participant's arms during the rotation and loses stability.
2. The string wraps around the diablo's axle and makes a knot.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Shortening the string if necessary. Keeping the diablo in the middle of the string while executing the pattern, and not pulling too hard with either hand.
2. Keeping the hands close together. The hands must perform the whole movement. If only one hand makes the movement, the string may wrap around the diablo's axle.





## DIABOLO HANDSTICK RELEASE

### Technical Element Description

Tossing and catching a handstick.

### Prerequisites

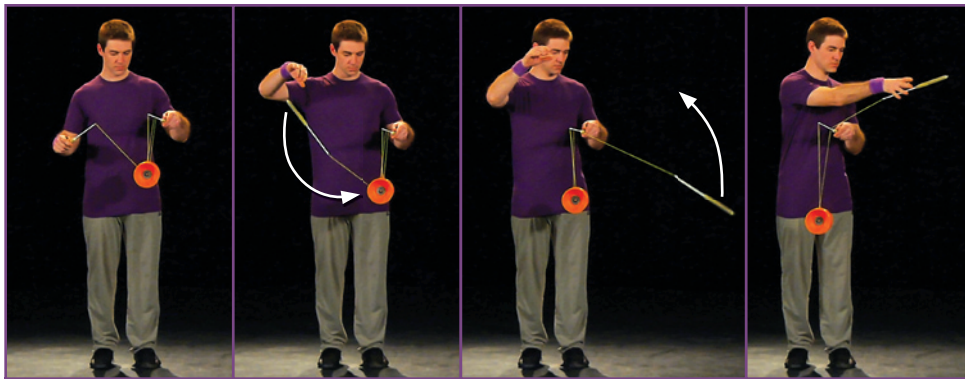
- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Mastering the basic spinning technique and diabolo correction.
- Trapeze.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Make the trapeze pattern, then let go of one handstick and catch it. If the trapeze is made to the left side, the right handstick is released. In contrast, if the trapeze is to the right side, the left handstick is released. **M 1**

#### Explanation for the left side

- The string is rolled around the left handstick, which points to the front. Put the right handstick perpendicular to the left handstick so that it points in its direction. Release the handstick. It will go under the diabolo sliding along the axle and then under the left handstick. It must be caught above the left handstick with the right hand.

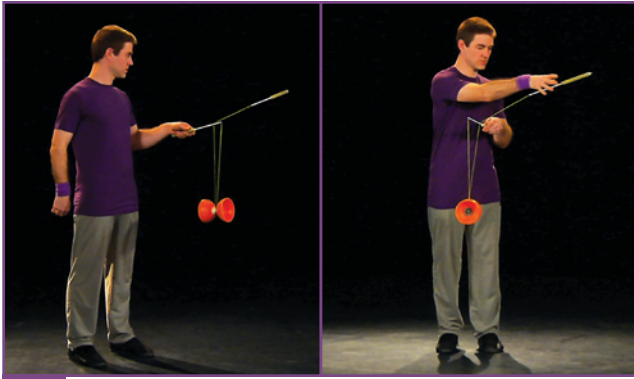


M 1

### Educational

1. Make the trapeze pattern to the left. Turn the right handstick so that it points to the left. Release the handstick without trying to catch it. Next, try to catch the handstick. **ED 1**





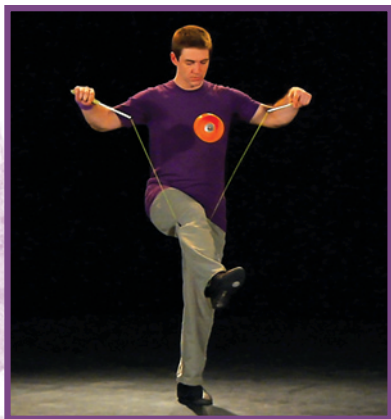
ED 1

### Common Mistakes

1. A knot is created around the diabolo when the participant releases the handstick.
2. The handstick comes back too fast and the participant is unable to catch it.
3. When the participant catches the handstick, his hand is reversed, making it more difficult.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Pointing the handstick to the side where it will be released.
2. Catching the handstick above the other handstick, without waiting too long. Trying to catch the handstick while crossing the arms.
3. Catching the handstick with the thumb down.



## DIABOLO

### ORBIT AROUND THE LEG

#### Technical Element Description

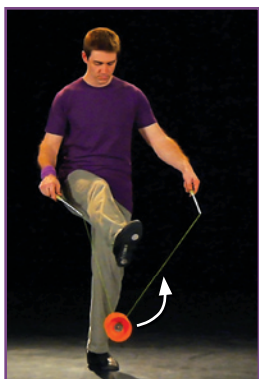
Rotating of the diabolo around one leg.

#### Prerequisites

- Maintaining a good rotation speed of the diabolo.
- Correcting the diabolo.
- Tossing the diabolo.

#### Explanation of the Movement

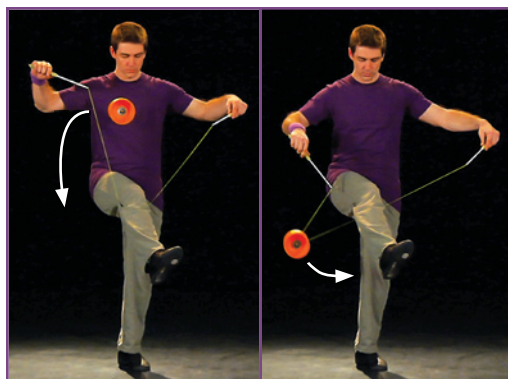
- Lift one leg and bring it over the diabolo and string. **M 1**
- Make a pendulum toward the right, then go back to the left and toss the diabolo. **M 2**
- Once the diabolo leaves the string and goes over the leg, catch it with the right handstick. The diabolo returns to position under the leg. **M 3**
- Make the movement continuously by repeating the sequences.



M 1



M 2

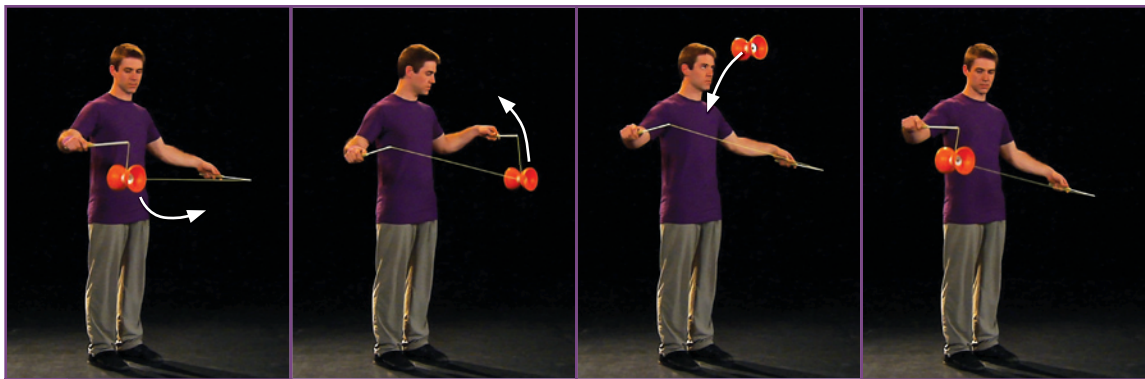


M 3

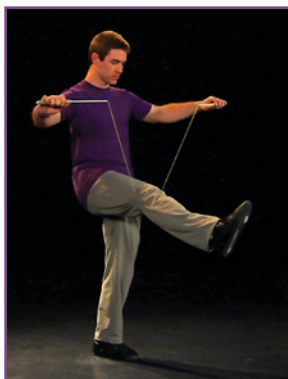
#### Educationals

1. Practise small tosses. Make the diabolo roll on the string from right to left. **ED 1**
2. Practise with the handsticks alone and make the movement under the leg. **ED 2**
3. Practise the pendulum under the leg. Swing the diabolo like a pendulum under the leg. **ED 3**
4. Begin with a single turn, then two or three turns, and so on.

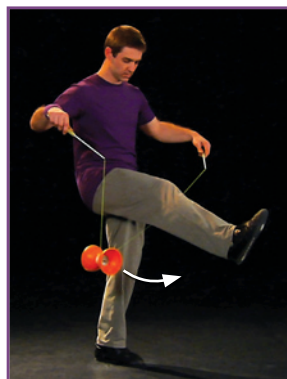




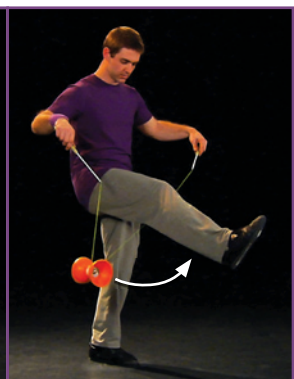
ED 1



ED 2



ED 3



### Common Mistakes

1. The diabolo comes off the string.
2. The diabolo loses speed.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the ends of the handsticks close enough together.
2. Respecting the rotation direction of the diabolo. It needs to be passed under the leg from the right side and over the leg from the left side. Because it turns in a clockwise direction, it should even gain speed.

### Variant

1. Orbits around the arms, body, head.



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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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