

# BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



## FIXED TRAPEZE



FONDATION  
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



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

### **We would like to thank:**

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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 educational elements 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 educational elements.

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.**



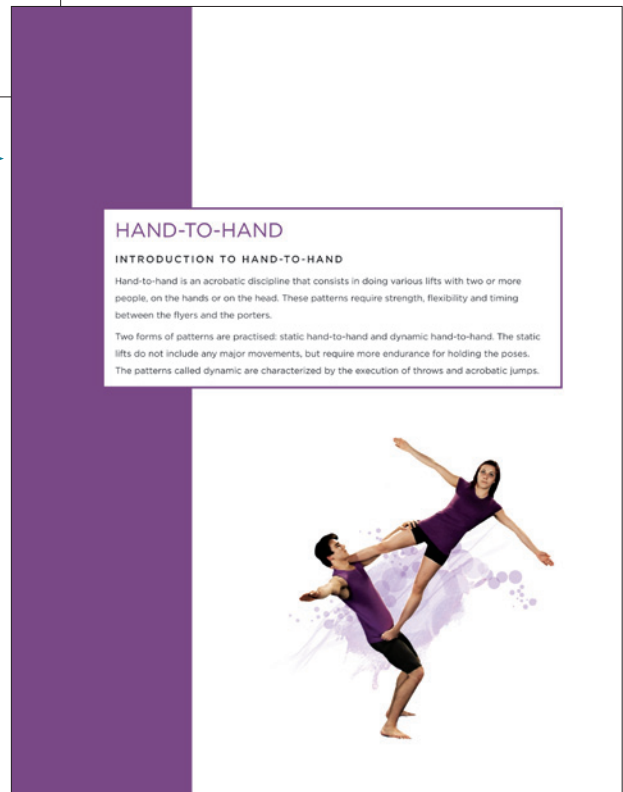
# INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



## 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.

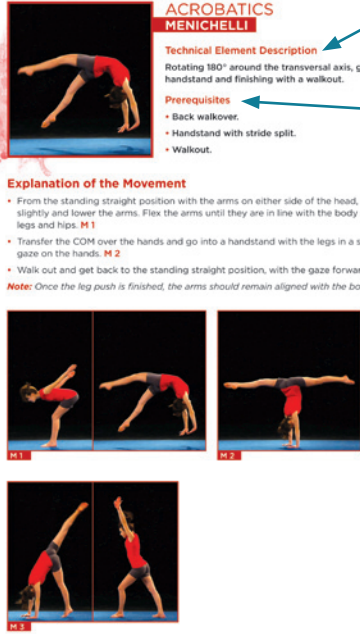
**Prerequisites**

- 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.

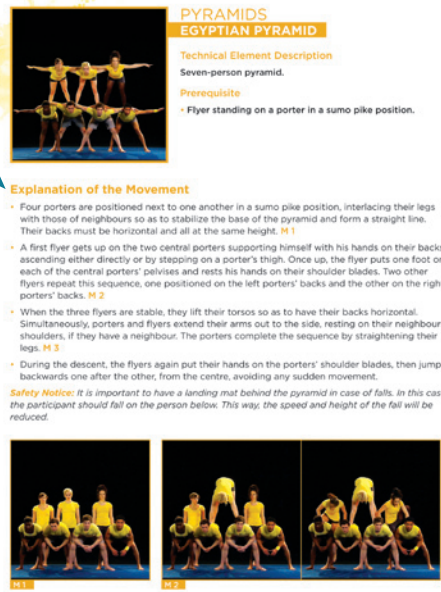
**Prerequisite**

- 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.

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## 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.


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 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

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### ROPE AND SILK HANGING



**Technical Element Description**  
Secure hanging of the silk.

**Explanation**

- Always anchor the silk onto a steel part, preferably circular, with an inner circumference of a minimum of 9 centimetres and a diameter of 1.5 centimetres. The ring should be forged and not welded. A pear- or oval-shaped part is also acceptable if it conforms to the same criteria; make sure the part has a sufficiently wide base to prevent the silk from moving up.

**Set-up**

- Fold the silk lengthwise into two equal parts and nestle the ring in the fold. Wrap the ends of the silk around the ring from the outside and bring them through the centre of the ring, from front to back, under the centre of the silk.

<p><b>Common Mistake</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using an aluminum alloy part, intended for a use other than anchoring. For example, using an "eight-shaped" descender for mountain climbing, which is a part that is too small and also more fragile than steel since it is made of alloy.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Correction and Corrective Exercise</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtaining the equipment from a supplier specialized in acrobatic rigging.</li> </ol>
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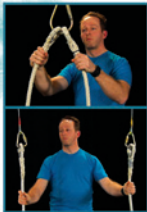
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## Maintenance and Rigging of Aerial Devices

Information on the set-up, maintenance and safe rigging of aerial devices.

Information found at the end of the chapters of each of the aerial disciplines.

### FIXED TRAPEZE RIGGING AND MAINTENANCE



**Technical Element Description**  
Secure rigging, maintenance and storage of the trapeze.

**Explanation**

**Rigging**

- Basic rigging:** Make sure the carabiners are screwed downward. The structure or system to which the trapeze is anchored must be checked by a rigger or engineer.
- Adjustable-height trapeze:** There are two methods for safely attaching a trapeze onto an adjustable-height system:
  - Safety knot for the ascender;
  - Pin rail fastening knot.

**Maintenance**

- Trapeze maintenance is done at least once a year.**
- Considering how the trapeze is used, it is important to check the rope-bar attachments under the sleeve. The fabric should be unstitched and the padding material should be unwrapped in order to check the welds, shackles, thimbles, cables and ropes, and replaced if necessary.
- Periodically, the tape on the bar should be changed if it becomes too slippery, dirty or dry, or if it starts to unroll. Take care to always remove the old tape and any excess adhesive from the bar before replacing it. Stretch the tape while covering the bar to prevent forming folds.

**Storage**

- Store in a clean and dry place. Both ropes must be rolled up; avoid rolling them too tightly or folding them.

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# INSTRUCTIONS - VIDEO DOCUMENTS

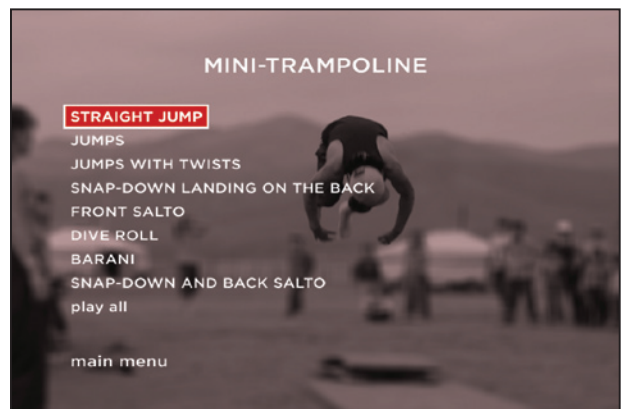


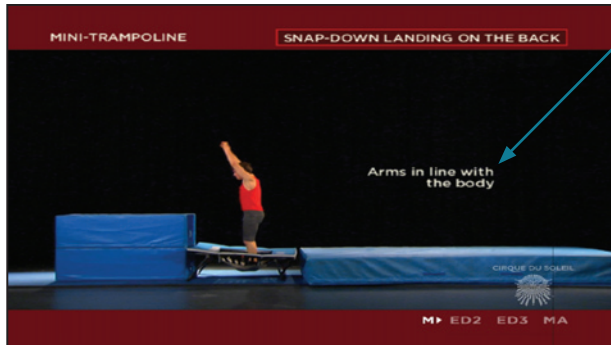
## Main Menu

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.



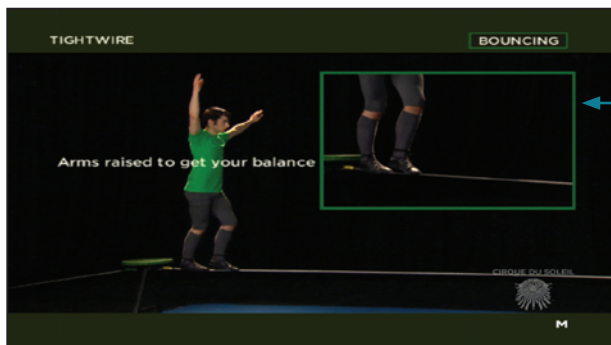


## Warnings

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.





## FIXED TRAPEZE

### INTRODUCTION TO FIXED TRAPEZE

The practice of this discipline consists in executing various patterns, hangs and balances on a simple trapeze, but without using swinging movements. Made up of a horizontal metal bar suspended by two vertical ropes hooked at two points, the fixed trapeze can be used by one or two people.

A variant of the trapeze, which includes, among other disciplines, flying trapeze, swinging trapeze, dance trapeze and triple trapeze, the fixed trapeze requires strength, flexibility, endurance and coordination.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Arabesque

Leg bent to 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.

### Candlestick position

Inverted hang in hollow chest position.

### Flexed feet

Position with the ankle in flexion.

### Hip extension

Action of moving the legs and the upper body away from each other, or increasing the torso/leg angle.

### Hollow chest position

Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the front, with the arms extended on each side of the head or of torso and the pelvis in a posterior tilt. When the legs or the back of the knees are hooked onto the trapeze, the curve is made with the upper body only, with the ribs closed and the hips in extension.

### Pin rail

A vertical wall bracket with regularly spaced notches or projections used to store, fix or hang various circus riggings.

### Pull-up

Action of lifting the body, hanging on a bar or an aerial hoop, by pulling up with the arms.

### Tape

Tape covering the trapeze bar.

### Wall bar

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

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

### Shoulder position

When the body is hanging by the hands, the shoulders must be contracted downward and the shoulder blades toward the spine so as to leave the neck free and the shoulders perpendicular to the head.

### Head position

Hanging, the head should follow the natural curve of the spine, between the arms and with the chin slightly elevated.

### Torso position

Hanging, the stabilizer muscles must be contracted to support the body, the ribs should be pulled toward the navel and the abdominals tightened toward the back of the body, but without impeding the natural curve of the spine.

### Hand grip

The thumb should be wrapped around the bar at all times. Generally speaking, the pronated grip is used on the trapeze, that is, the palm of the hand is turned down.





## **SAFETY**

Always put a landing mat under the apparatus and respect this space, especially when the trapezist is practising. Also, practising the fixed trapeze at a low height is particularly recommended for beginners. The instructor should be aware of his limitations and be able to assess those of the participants. Finally, the equipment must be in good condition and properly installed.





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## FIXED TRAPEZE KNEE HANG

### Technical Element Description

Hanging on the bar by one knee.

### Prerequisites

- Double knee hang.
- Holding by both hands, by one knee, or by one knee, one hand.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the double knee position with hips in extension, buttocks tight, extend one leg upward and bring back into arabesque.
- Return to the double knee hang by making the reverse movement with the leg.

### Educationals

1. The participant lies on the stomach on the floor with one knee bent. The instructor pulls on his heel to straighten the leg. The participant must keep his knee bent beyond 90° while pressing the pelvis onto the floor. **ED 1**
2. Hold the foot of the leg doing the knee hang in position with the free leg or hand. **ED 2**
3. Support the body weight by means of one or two ropes hanging from the trapeze. **ED 3**



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

## 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.



MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant lets the free hip and leg fall and has difficulty returning the knee to the bar.
2. The participant stays in a pike position and has difficulty maintaining a secure knee angle.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the hips even throughout the movement.
2. Opening the hips by tightening the buttocks and pressing the pelvis forward; pulling the heels toward the buttocks.

## Variants

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



V 1



V 2





## FIXED TRAPEZE BANANA

### Technical Element Description

Lateral extended position with one leg supported on a rope.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the seated position, the body diagonal near the right rope, transfer the left hand onto this rope below the right hand and bring the right buttocks in front of the bar. **M 1**
- Extend the arms to lower the torso, lift and bend the right leg to rest the thigh and calf on the rope. Remove the hands and lower the torso completely. **M 2**
- Find and grasp the rope again, contracting the abdominals to return to the seated position. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

### Educationals

1. Seated, take the position lying diagonally on the right side and let go with the right hand. **ED 1**
2. Take the position while keeping one or both hands on the knee of the right leg. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The instructor stands behind the trapeze, guides the lowering of the back and holds the knee in the right position.
- If the trapeze is higher, and if the participant's knee exceeds the right rope by at least 10 centimetres, the instructor stands behind the trapeze with his arms under the participant's shoulders.

**Note:** The trapeze should be lower so that the instructor can better assist the participant in this pattern.

### Common Mistakes

1. The bent leg rotates externally.
2. The free leg is raised or bent, or both.
3. The participant slips to the ground.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the leg parallel to the rope in order to support the inside of the thigh and calf on the rope.
2. Making sure that the free leg is extended and horizontal, the outside touching the rope.
3. Bringing the right buttock in front of the bar and extending the body along the trapeze. The right knee should exceed the rope by at least 10 centimetres.

## Variants

1. Wrapped leg banana. **V 1**
2. Both legs extended. **V 2**
3. Arabesque banana: Leg to the back, foot pulled toward the head. **V 3**







V 1



V 2



V 3





## FIXED TRAPEZE ONE-LEG MONKEY ROLL

### Technical Element Description

Backwards rotation movement around one knee.

### Prerequisites

- Double knee hang.
- Holding by one hand, one knee.
- Back roll on the floor. (See *Back roll, Acrobatics*, p. 42.)

### Explanation of the Movement

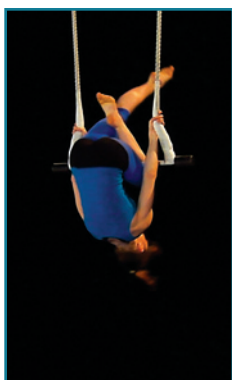
- From the double knee hang position, the hands on the bar, lift the right leg and bring it under the bar. **M 1**
- Put the right elbow under the bar and take the rope with the palm outward; do the same thing with the left hand. **M 2**
- Create downward momentum by swinging the free leg. Throw the free leg between the ropes. Continue to roll the pelvis upward, keeping the torso against the bent leg. **M 3**
- Pull with the arms to bring the weight over the left thigh. Lift the torso, keeping the left leg bent. **M 4**
- One at a time, change the hand grip and take the seated position.



M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4



## Educationals

1. From the single knee hang, with the hands on the bar, do a small swinging movement. **ED 1**
2. Do the roll after two or three swings with the free leg. **ED 2**



**ED 1**



**ED 2**

## Manual Aid

- At the start: The instructor secures the knee hang and gives the swing direction to the free leg. **MA 1**
- During the roll: The instructor supports the participant by the shoulders and guides the free leg downward, behind the trapeze. **MA 2**
- At the finish: The instructor supports the bent leg and puts one hand behind the participant until the participant has returned to neutral position. **MA 3**



**MA 1**



MA 2



MA 3

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not know which way to roll.
2. The participant cannot complete the roll.
3. The participant incorrectly positions his hands at the start.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Lifting and bringing the free leg between the ropes; the shoulders and the back will lower toward the ground.
2. Making sure the bent leg stays bent and the torso is tight against the thigh until the body is above the bar.
3. Turning the palms out rather than toward oneself.

### Variant

1. Two-leg monkey roll: Keep the torso against the thighs during the roll and keep the gaze on the knees. This variant requires more arm strength since there is no momentum. **V 1**



V 1





## FIXED TRAPEZE FRONT ROLL

### Technical Element Description

Forward rotation movement landing in the seated position on the bar.

### Prerequisites

- Front roll on the floor. (See *Front roll, Acrobatics*, p. 23.)
- Supporting one's body weight in a pull-up and hanging from the ropes.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Standing in demi-pointe, the hands at face height, bring the elbows in front of the ropes and transfer one hand and then the other to hip height, with the thumbs down. **M 1**
- Bring the torso toward the legs and progressively transfer the weight onto the hands by extending the arms; the feet must leave the bar. **M 2**
- Pull up with the arms while keeping the legs against the torso. Continue to roll until landing in the seated position on the bar. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

### Educationals

1. From the inverted pike position under the bar, rolled to the back, reach forward with the legs extended until hanging. The participant can also pull up as soon as his feet have left the bar. **ED 1**
2. Do the roll in tuck position to make pulling up easier, and return to a controlled seated position. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The instructor stands to the side to help the participant bring his torso to his legs by putting one hand behind his thigh and the other on his upper back. **MA 1**
- During the roll, reverse the hands to help the participant return to the seated position and stabilize the bar. **MA 2**
- When the trapeze is higher and the participant can support his weight, the instructor stands to the side to protect the participant's head at the start and to help him get back to the seated position. If the bar swings during the roll, the instructor can stabilize it.
- If the participant finishes with his buttocks below the bar, the instructor can give him a push under the feet. The participant must have his legs extended for this manual aid.

**Note:** The trapeze should be low, 30 to 50 centimetres from the floor, for sustained aid.



MA 1



MA 2



### Common Mistakes

1. The participant is initially unbalanced during the hand movement.
2. The participant cannot initiate the roll because his hips are too far back.
3. The participant cannot sit; he finishes with the buttocks below the bar.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the body straight during the hand movement and transferring them one at a time.
2. Keeping the hips between both ropes and transferring the body weight to the hands toward the front.
3. Beginning to pull up as soon as the feet leave the bar and waiting for the bar to be under the thighs to sit.

### Variants

1. Arabesque: Lift one leg to the back before leaning forward and rolling. **V 1**
2. Tuck finish: Put the feet on the bar instead of sitting. **V 2**



V 1



V 2



## FIXED TRAPEZE BACK BALANCE

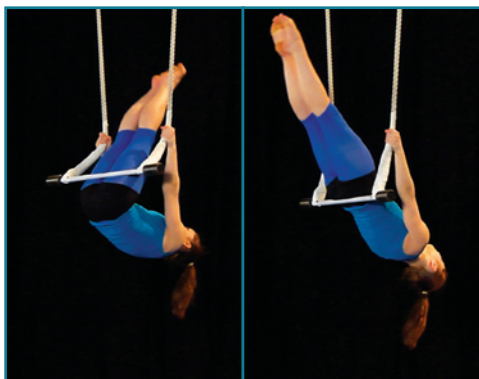
### Technical Element Description

Balancing the lower back on the bar.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the knee hang position, put the hands on the ropes at about 20 centimetres from the trapeze. Rock backwards in a pike position to release the buttocks from the bar. Going through a candlestick position, extend the body into an arch position to lay the lower back on the bar. **M 1**
- Slowly release the hands and balance with the arms. The position is easier to hold when the legs are separated. The upper body should be arched, but the abdominals must remain contracted while the head is relaxed. **M 2**

**Note:** It is also possible to get into this position from the seated position by sliding the bar under the back.



M 1



M 2

### Educationals

1. On a raised mat, arch the upper body and allow the head to fall to the floor. **ED 1**
2. Arch the back while in prone position. **ED 2**







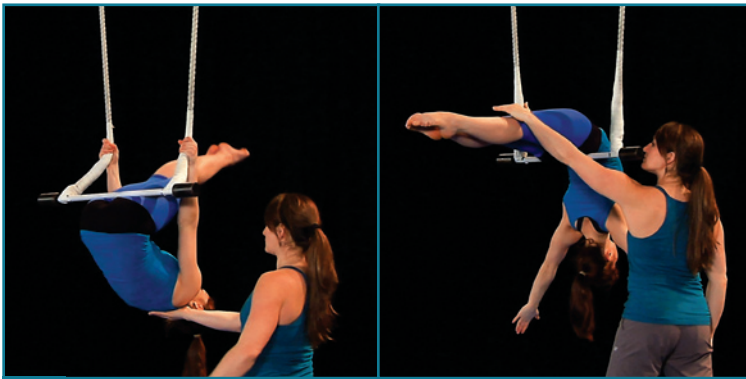
ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The instructor stands beside the participant and helps him into position and then to swing into the pike position, after which he holds his legs to prevent rocking backwards. **MA 1**



MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant's head is not relaxed backwards.
2. The participant's buttocks are not tight or his hips are not extended enough.
3. The participant feels back pain.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Relaxing the neck muscles.
2. Tightening the buttocks and contracting the abdominals.
3. Doing the movement progressively in order to get used to the discomfort. **EX**

## Variants

1. Back balance with straddle split. **V 1**
2. Back balance with legs separated. **V 2**

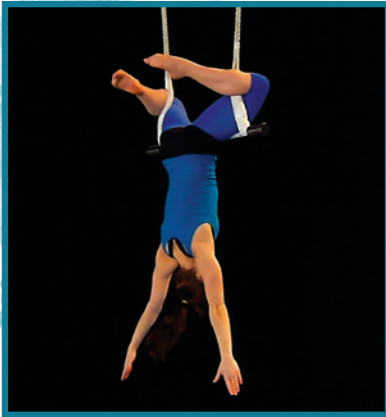


**V 1**



**V 2**





## FIXED TRAPEZE PULLOVER TO CATCHER'S LOCK

### Technical Element Description

Placement of the hips on the bar, balancing and swinging forward holding the ropes by the knees.

### Prerequisites

- Back roll on the floor with the legs extended.  
(See *Back roll, Acrobatics*, p. 42.)
- Raising the legs to the bar.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From hanging under the bar, swing the legs, extended and pressed together, in forward and backwards tempo. **M 1**
- Bring the legs to the bar and bend the arms to lift the pelvis onto the bar in slightly piked position. **M 2**
- Put the pelvis on the bar; continue to lower the legs to the ground in order to lift the torso and then balance. The bar should be between the pubic bone and the hip bones, and the abdominals should be contracted. **M 3**
- Spread the legs and swing forward hooking a knee around each rope, in frog position. **M 4**



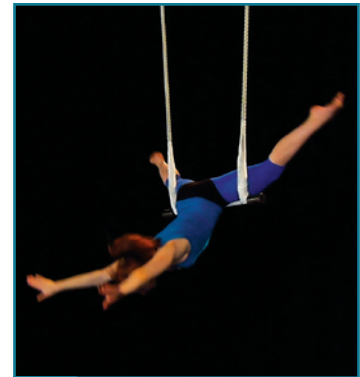
M 1



M 2



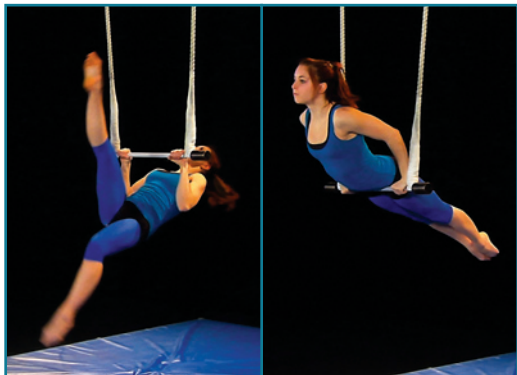
M 3



M 4

## Educationals

1. Get onto the stomach from a mat by throwing a leg. Keep the hands on the bar for support. **ED 1**
2. Do the pullover from hanging by the hands on the ropes, the elbows at bar height. Keep the hands on the ropes as long as possible in order to cushion the catcher's lock. **ED 2**
3. From hanging by the hands under the bar, swing the legs forward and slide the feet along the ropes to help bring the pelvis over the bar. Lift the torso, with or without the hands on the bar, then do the catcher's lock. **ED 3**



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

## Manual Aid

- Ascent: The instructor holds the participant's thigh and back. **MA 1**
- Ankle/calf balance:
  - If the participant falls forward, push his legs toward the floor; **MA 2**
  - If the participant falls backwards, push his legs up.
- Catch: The instructor supports the participant at the shoulder to slow down the action. **MA 3**





MA 1



MA 2



MA 3

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant's legs are spread or bent, or both, during the tempo to the back.
2. Pulling with the arms is done too early for the pullover.
3. The participant rests on the middle of his stomach and has difficulty staying balanced.
4. The participant's body is destabilized forward in the balanced position on the bar.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the legs close together and extended.
2. Waiting for the thighs to be near the bar.
3. Putting the bar under the hip bones and contracting the abdominals.
4. Looking straight ahead and contracting the back and buttock muscles.

### Variant

1. Variation of the leg position during the tempos and the balance positions. V 1



V 1



## FIXED TRAPEZE MERMAID

### Technical Element Description

**Mermaid:** Hanging by one hand and one ankle, the body toward the floor.

**Mermaid Catch:** From the seated position, rocking backwards, one hand on the bar, and hooking the rope with the opposite ankle.

### Prerequisite

- Holding by one hand and the opposite knee.

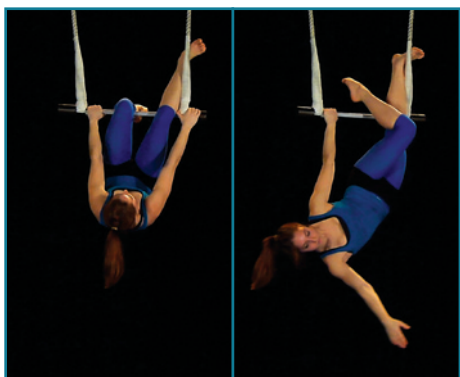
## Explanation of the Movement

### Mermaid

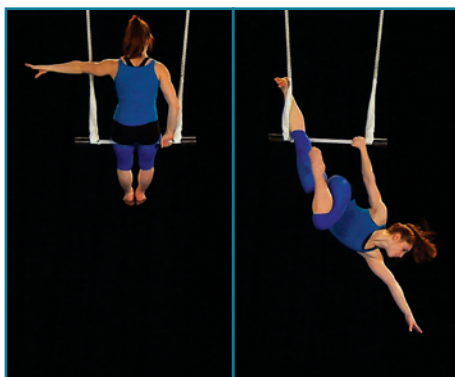
- From the knee hang position, the hands on the bar, hook the right ankle around the rope with the foot flexed, and remove the right hand. Remove the left leg, bring it toward the ground and raise the free arm to the front. **M 1**

### Mermaid Catch

- In the seated position, the right hand on the bar and the left arm extended behind the rope, move the left leg to the side.
- Rock backwards 180° hooking the ankle with the foot flexed, in front of the rope.
- Continue to turn the stomach toward the ground and take the mermaid position, with the head and arms raised. Return to neutral position, either knee hang or seated, by hooking the free leg's knee first. **M 2**



M 1

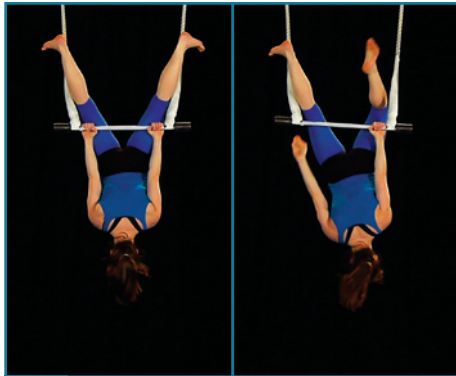


M 2



## Educationals

1. From hanging upside down, with the feet flexed around the ropes and the back slightly arched, let go with one hand and the opposite foot. **ED 1**
2. Do the mermaid catch movement while keeping one hand on the rope until the ankle is hooked. **ED 2**
3. Do the mermaid catch movement by bringing the legs toward the torso, into a pike position, before swinging until the foot is hooked. **ED 3**



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

## Manual Aid

- **Mermaid:** The instructor stands behind the trapeze and supports the middle of the participant's body; he guides the participant's placement and his return to knee hang. **MA 1**
- **Mermaid Catch:** The instructor supports the participant's back in order to slow down his drop. Pay attention to the free leg. **MA 2**

**Note:** To avoid too much speed, it is preferable for the participant to keep one hand on the bar in the beginning during manual aid.



MA 1



MA 2

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant throws his head back and increases the risk of a fall because, in this position, he cannot see the hooking point for his foot on the rope.
2. The participant flexes his ankle.
3. The participant's stomach faces the back wall.
4. The participant's free leg remains up or back.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the gaze on the rope until the ankle is hooked, then transferring the gaze to the front.
2. Keeping the foot flexed by bringing it toward the floor.
3. Continuing to turn a quarter turn to face the floor.
4. Lowering the free leg toward the floor, keeping the upper thighs tight.

### Variants

1. Mermaid backwards: Bring the free leg under the bar and extend the back. **V 1**
2. Mermaid: Foot-to-hand or foot-to-head arabesque. **V 2**
3. Mermaid with both legs. **V 3**
4. Mermaid with full split. **V 4**



**V 1**



**V 2**



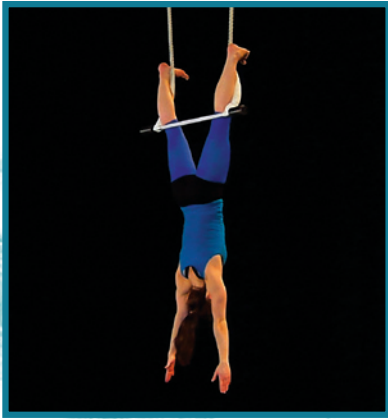
**V 3**



**V 4**







## FIXED TRAPEZE HANGING

### Technical Element Description

**Hanging:** Vertical position, head down, ankles hooked around each rope with the feet parallel.

**Ankle Catch:** From the seated position, rocking back 180°, the ankles hooked in front of the ropes.

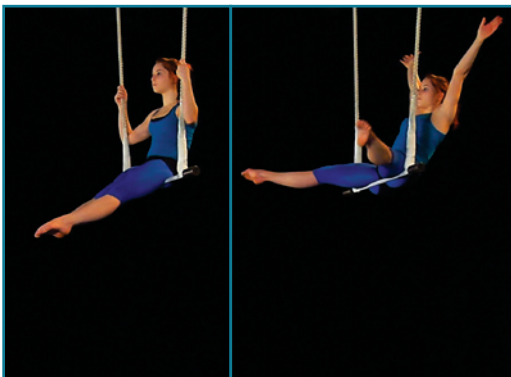
### Prerequisites

- Keeping the feet flexed.
- Maintaining the hollow chest position.

### Explanation of the Movement

- Seated on the bar, the legs extended, spread the legs. **M 1**
- Rock back 180°. In the hollow chest position, get into the ankle catch: push the ropes outward with the legs, hook the ankles around the ropes and keep the feet flexed. Keep the gaze on the ropes. **M 2**
- Stabilize the vertical position with the bar at calf height. **M 3**
- Grasp the bar or the ropes again and return to the knee hang or seated position.

**Note:** In order to protect the skin of the ankles, the participant can wear socks or medical ankle braces in fabric or neoprene and even leather braces.



M 1



M 2



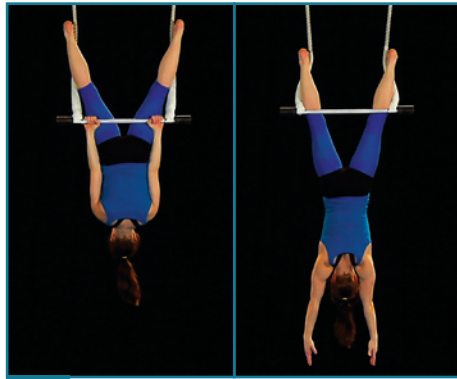
M 3

## Educationals

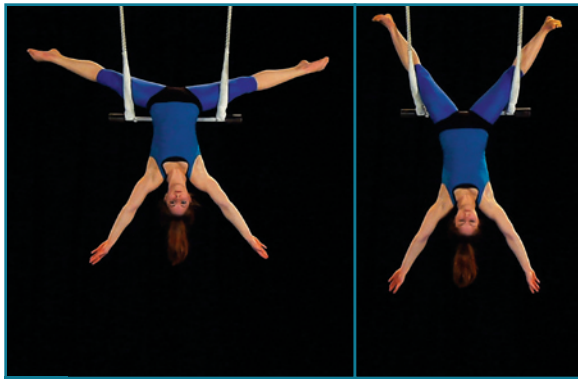
1. With manual aid from knee hang position with the hands in the centre of the bar, rock backwards and get into the ankle hang. **ED 1**
2. From the hanging position with the hand in the centre of the bar, get into the ankle hang. Release the hands from the inverted hang, with the feet flexed around the ropes. **ED 2**
3. From back balance with the legs in a split, slide into the ankle hang while keeping the outside of the legs in contact with the ropes. **ED 3**
4. Supine on the floor, spread the legs to the width of the trapeze, with the feet flexed. The instructor puts his hands outside the ankles and resists the participant's movement. **ED 4**



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3



ED 4



## Manual Aid

- The instructor holds the participant's hips from behind.
- When the participant is getting back up, the instructor stands to the side and helps him into the pike position by putting one hand on his upper back and the other behind one of his thighs. **MA 1**



**MA 1**

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant is unable to keep the feet flexed.
2. The participant drops too low or externally rotates the legs, or both.
3. The participant initiates the drop with his head.
4. The participant slips or falls getting back up.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Turning the outside of the feet toward the body, toward the floor.
2. Keeping the legs extended and parallel.
3. Staying in hollow chest position and looking at the ropes until the feet are hooked onto them.
4. Keeping the legs extended to grasp the bar again, with the help of a hand under the thigh, if necessary.



## FIXED TRAPEZE RIGGING AND MAINTENANCE

### Technical Element Description

Secure rigging, maintenance and storage of the trapeze.

## Explanation

### Rigging

- **Basic rigging:** Make sure the carabiners are screwed downward. The structure or system to which the trapeze is anchored must be checked by a rigger or engineer.
- **Adjustable-height trapeze:** There are two methods for safely attaching a trapeze onto an adjustable-height system:
  - Safety knot for the ascender;
  - Pin rail fastening knot.

### Maintenance

- **Trapeze maintenance is done at least once a year.**
- Considering how the trapeze is used, it is important to check the rope-bar attachments under the sleeve. The fabric should be unstitched and the padding material should be unwrapped in order to check the welds, shackles, thimbles, cables and ropes, and replaced if necessary.
- Periodically, the tape on the bar should be changed if it becomes too slippery, dirty or dry, or if it starts to unroll. Take care to always remove the old tape and any excess adhesive from the bar before replacing it. Stretch the tape while covering the bar to prevent forming folds.

### Storage

- Store in a clean and dry place. Both ropes must be rolled up; avoid rolling them too tightly or folding them.





The mission of *Fondation Cirque du Soleil™* is to promote the circus arts as a development tool to help disadvantaged groups, especially at-risk youth, increase their creative potential, social skills and physical capacity. The foundation also ensures that all revenues from the distribution of *Cirque du Soleil™* educational material will be reinvested in the company's social and cultural programs.

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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