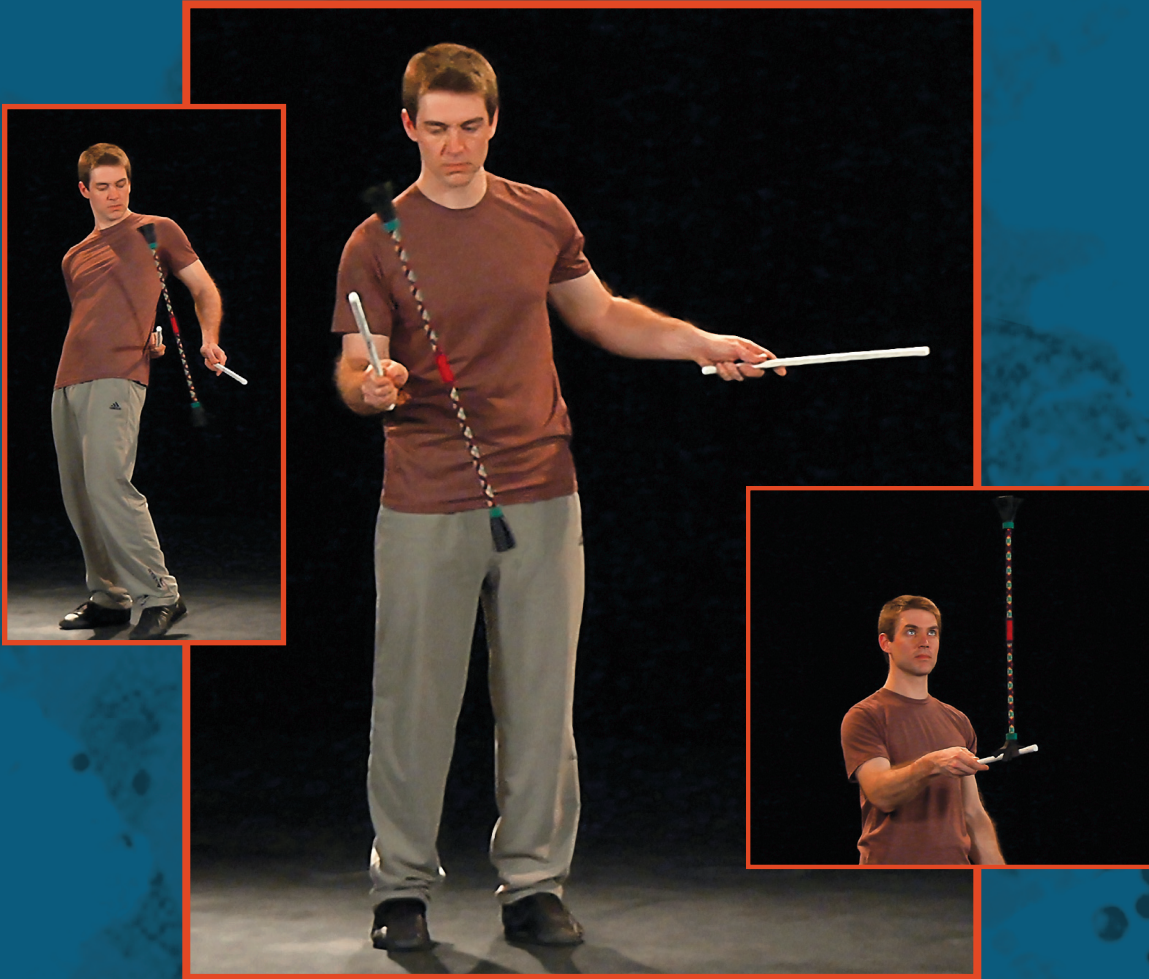


BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



FLOWER STICK



FONDATION
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



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.

We would like to thank:

Gaétan Morency, Vice-President of Global Citizenship, for his support in the production of this project.
Marc Lalonde, Executive Director of the National Circus School, as well as all the employees of Cirque du Soleil and the National Circus School for their collaboration.

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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.



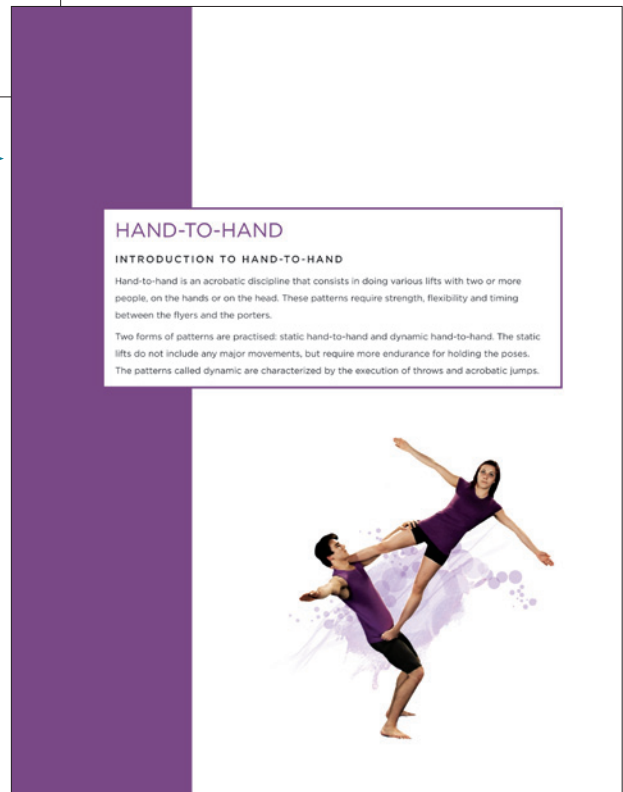
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



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.


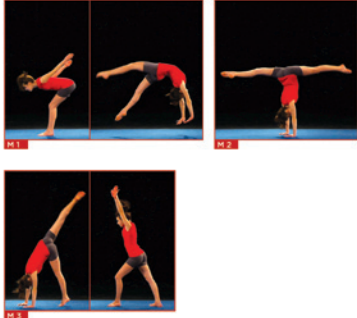
Prerequisites

- 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.

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. EX
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



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

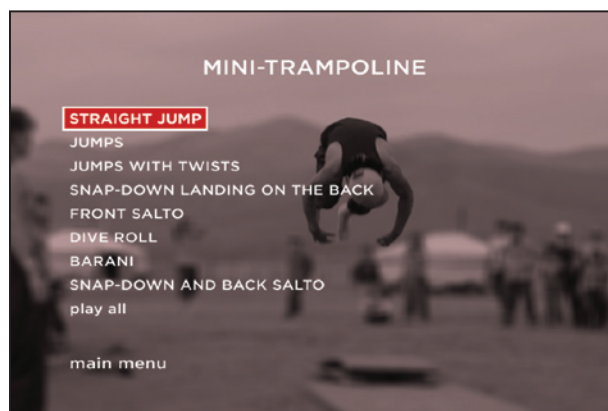


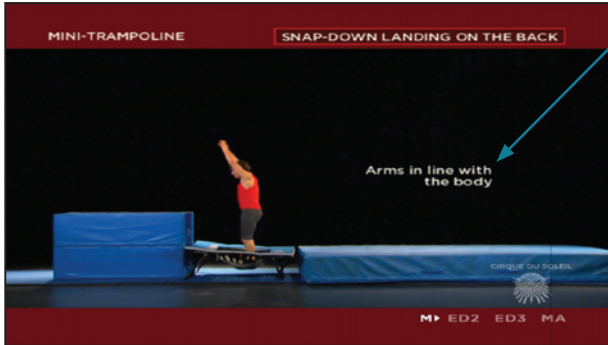
Main Menu

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.



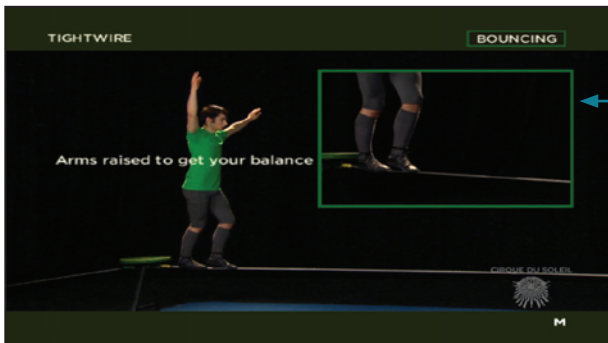


Warnings

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.



FLOWER STICK

INTRODUCTION TO THE FLOWER STICK

The flower stick is a juggling discipline that consists in creating different patterns while keeping the stick in the air by means of handsticks.

There are two main families of stick: the devil stick and the flower stick, which has additional weights at its ends. The flower stick is often used for its easier handling and its attractive visual characteristics.

Practised by both professional artists and amateurs, it is, for some, a game, for others, an art.

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



EQUIPMENT

The standard length for the flower stick is 65 to 75 centimetres, and the standard length for the handsticks is 40 to 50 centimetres.

In order to facilitate handling, the stick and the handsticks are normally covered with an adhesive material like rubber, silicone or adhesive tape.

The devil stick has a biconical shape, with a diameter of 3 to 4 centimetres at the ends, tapering to 2 centimetres in the centre. In contrast, the flower stick is generally straight. In addition, its ends have a weight made up of leather, fabric or rubber tassels resembling a flower. A feature of the “flowers” is to slow the movements of the stick, which makes learning the flower stick easier than learning the devil stick.



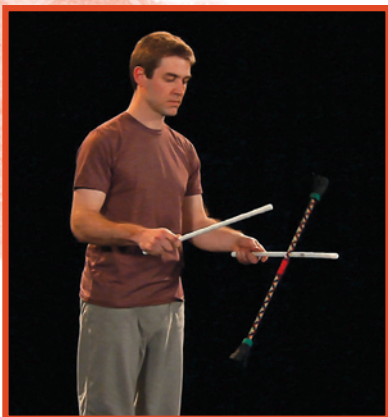
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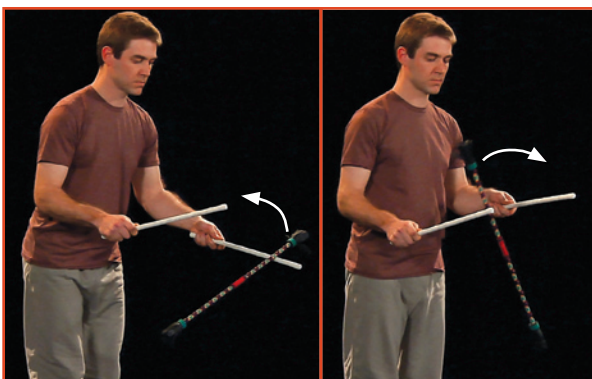
FLOWER STICK TICK-TOCKS

Technical Element Description

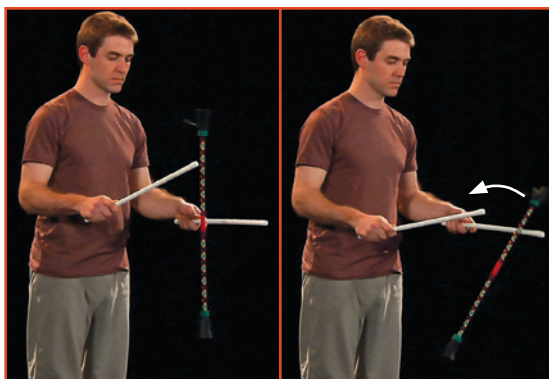
Rocking the flower stick from one handstick to the other.

Explanation of the Movement

- Standing, take a handstick in each hand, keeping the two handsticks parallel to each other and horizontal. Place the hands a quarter of the way up the handsticks.
- Place the flower stick vertically on the ground.
- Rock the flower stick from one handstick to the other, from left to right, by hitting the stick above the centre with the handsticks. Increase this movement by moving the handsticks further apart and with increasing speed, in order to lift the stick into the air. **M 1**
- This movement will make a tick-tock sound; this is how the element got its name.
- There are two ways to make this pattern:
 - By touching only the upper part of the flower stick with movements from right to left;
 - By synchronizing the hands with up and down movements, touching the upper part and then the lower part of the stick. When the right handstick is at the top, the left one is at the bottom, and so on. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. In the squat position, repeat the right to left movement with the flower stick using the hands rather than the handsticks. Lift the flower stick into the air. **ED 1**
2. Control on the ground: Kneeling, repeat the right to left movement with the flower stick and the handsticks, without trying to lift the flower stick into the air. **ED 2**
3. Kneeling, repeat the movement and stand up while lifting the flower stick with manual aid. **ED 3**

Note: If the space is narrowed between the outer ends of the handsticks, the stick will have a tendency to move closer to the participant. If this space is widened, the stick has a tendency to move away from the participant.



ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

Common Mistakes

1. The stick does not come up or is difficult to keep in the air.
2. The stick comes up, but springs out to the front.
3. The participant wants to move too quickly.

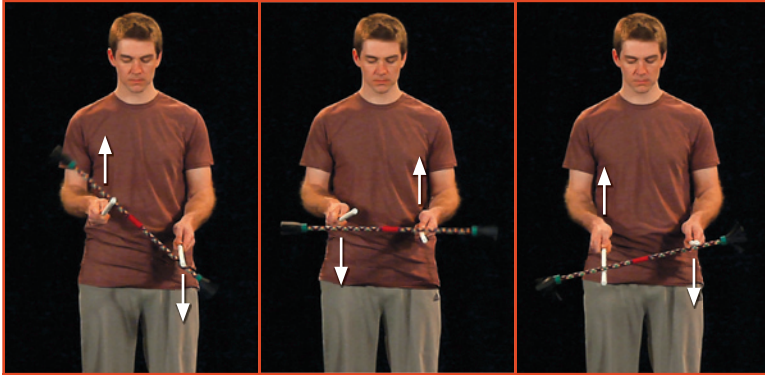
Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the movement of the stick. The centre of the stick must remain in the same place while the ends are moving.
2. Narrowing the space between the outside ends of the handsticks.
3. Remaining calm and maintaining a rhythmic movement. The tick-tock sound of the stick helps maintain awareness of the rhythm.



Variant

1. Horizontal tick-tocks: Rock the flower stick horizontally with the two handsticks simultaneously by hitting a quarter of the way from the ends of the stick, first up with one handstick and down with the other, and then vice versa. **V 1**



V 1





FLOWER STICK ARM TWIRLS

Technical Element Description

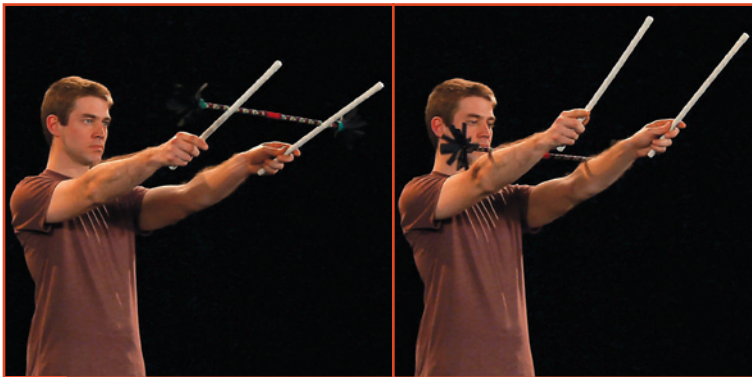
Movement that consists in rolling the stick over the handsticks and then over the arms.

Explanation of the Movement

- Keep the two handsticks horizontal, parallel to one another. Position the stick perpendicularly on the handsticks. **M 1**
- Lift the handsticks while keeping the arms outstretched: The stick will roll over the handsticks then over the arms, up to the chin. **M 2**
- Lower the handsticks: The stick will roll down along the arms. When it reaches the handsticks, replace them horizontally to slow down and stop the descent of the stick. The tick-tock movement can also be started. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3



Educational

1. Execute the pattern without the handsticks.

Common Mistakes

1. The stick rolls too fast.
2. The participant fails to stop the stick at the end of the movement.
3. When the stick reaches the chin, it deviates from its trajectory.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Reducing the slope by changing the angle of the arms.
2. Anticipating the stop to better slow down the descent of the stick.
3. Lowering the head to stop the stick with the chin. Lifting the head to release it.

Variant

1. Various twirls over the arms or the body. For example, throw the stick very gently when it reaches the handsticks. Point the outer end of the handsticks toward the shoulders by bending the elbows and wrists. Catch the stick on the handsticks, make it roll up to the chin, straighten the arms and make the stick roll down the arms.





FLOWER STICK HALF AND FULL TURN

Technical Element Description

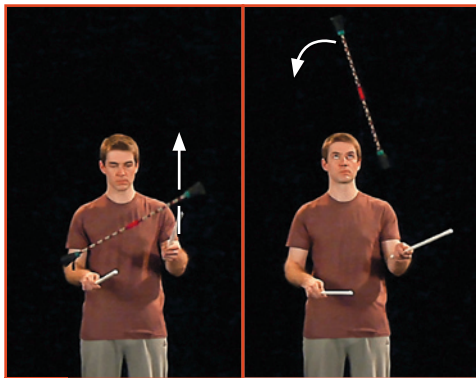
Throwing the stick so it makes a half or full turn.

Prerequisite

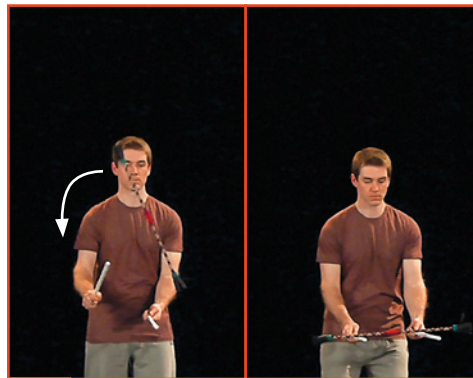
- Arm twirls.

Explanation of the Movement

- With the arms slightly bent and parallel to the ground, hold both handsticks horizontally. Position the stick perpendicularly on the handsticks.
- Throw the stick while pushing it harder with one of the hands; the stick should flip in the air. (See *Various throws*, p. 12.) Begin by having it make a half turn, then a full turn. **M 1**
- When throwing the stick, place it in the middle of the handsticks; when catching it, stabilize it by lifting or lowering the handsticks. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. Begin with small throws, applying the same force with both hands so that the stick does not flip. Then catch it. **ED 1**
2. Make a half turn with the stick by giving more force with one of the two hands.
3. Practise this movement with the hands rather than the handsticks. Keeping the hands open, place the stick on them. Throw it while controlling the rotation.

Note: It is important to practise this pattern by flipping the stick to both sides.





ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant throws the stick too hard.
2. The stick falls just before the throw.
3. The stick falls when it is caught.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Considering the weight of the stick. Controlling the half turn before throwing the stick higher.
2. Making sure to properly position the stick on the handsticks before throwing it. Keeping the handsticks horizontal when throwing.
3. Anticipating the movement in order to better keep the stick still when catching it. Correcting and balancing the stick by shifting the handsticks around to get back to the initial position.





FLOWER STICK VARIOUS THROWS

Technical Element Description

From the tick-tocks, throwing the flower stick into the air and catching it.

Prerequisites

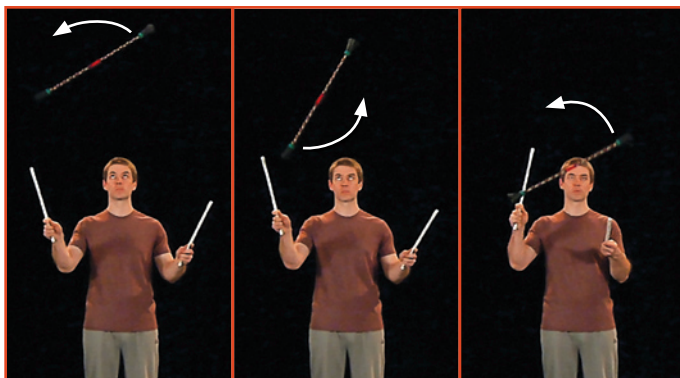
- Tick-tocks.
- Half and full turns.

Explanation of the Movement

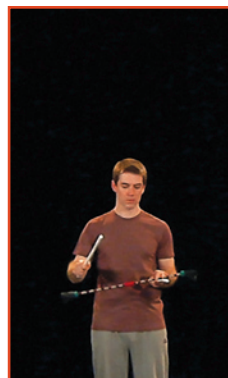
- Perform the tick-tock movement. With one hand, throw the flower stick in the air. Your technique will vary depending on the type of throw:
 - High throw: Hold the flower stick in the centre and throw. This type of throw generates less rotation, guarantees better stability and makes it easier to gain height.
 - Low throw: Hold the flower stick close to the ends of the stick and throw. This type of throw generates more rotation. **M 1**
- When the flower stick comes down, catch it in one of two ways:
 - Two-handstick catch: Wedge the flower stick between the two handsticks to stabilize it.
 - One-handstick catch: Catch it above the centre of the flower stick to cushion it with as much stability as possible. **M 2**

Note: Although it is more difficult to do, this second catching technique can quickly and easily be incorporated into sequences of moves once it has been mastered.

- Return to the tick-tock movement.



M 1



M 2



Educationals

1. Keeping the flower stick horizontal on the handsticks, throw it into the air with a half or full turn and catch it by wedging it between the two handsticks.
2. From the tick-tocks, thrust one of the two handsticks a little harder and throw the flower stick so that it does only a half turn. Catch it by wedging it between the two handsticks. Then try a full turn.
3. From the tick-tocks, throw the flower stick and catch it using just one handstick.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant throws the stick too far to the front or back.
2. The stick goes very high or turns on itself.
3. The participant throws the stick too hard; he does not control it correctly and misses his catches.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Practising throwing the stick by positioning it on the handsticks held horizontally. Throwing right, vertically. **EX**
2. Understanding the impact of the handstick on the stick. Pushing close to the centre of the stick will make the stick go higher. Pushing close to the ends will make it turn on itself without really gaining height.
3. Understanding how to use force according to the object being handled. Looking for precision, fluidity and control. Anticipating movements to get a smoother reception of the stick.

Variant

1. Throws with various body movements, such as a full turn, half turn or front roll.





FLOWER STICK TICK-TOCKS UNDER THE LEG AND HAND BEHIND THE BACK

Technical Element Description

Tick-tocks with a hand under the leg or behind the back.

Prerequisite

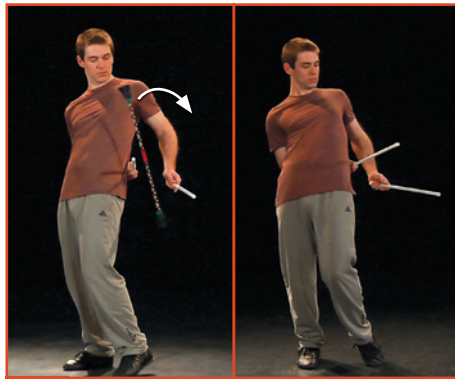
- Tick-tocks.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the tick-tocks, stop the movement of the stick on one of the two handsticks, pass the other handstick under the leg from the outside and continue the tick-tocks in this position. **M 1**
- Repeat the movement behind the back. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

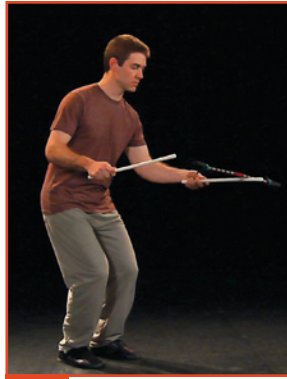
Educationals

1. Make the movement without the stick, using only the handsticks. Practise positioning and sequencing. **ED 1**
2. Practise stopping: Perform the tick-tocks and stop the movement of the stick, catching it on one of the handsticks. Try to keep the stick on this same handstick for as long as possible and then return to the tick-tocks. **ED 2**





ED 1



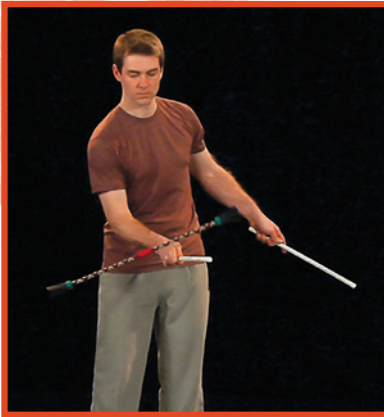
ED 2

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has difficulty properly positioning his handsticks after putting a hand under his leg or behind his back.
2. The participant does not have time to put the handstick under his leg or behind his back.
3. The participant loses his balance once the handstick is under his leg.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Reviewing the first movement and positioning the handsticks so that they are parallel and horizontal.
2. Practising stopping the stick's movement. Practising Educational 2.
3. Controlling the balance with the foot and not with the whole body.



FLOWER STICK ONE-HAND TICK-TOCKS

Technical Element Description

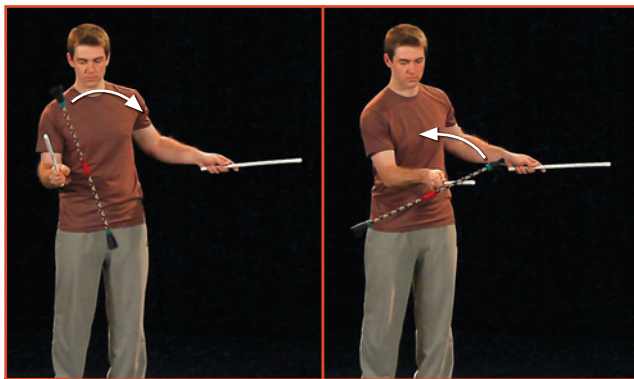
Rocking the stick from one side to the other with one hand only.

Prerequisites

- Tick-tocks.
- Good hand speed.

Explanation of the Movement

- Perform the tick-tocks and then remove one of the handsticks. Rock the remaining handstick from one side to the other so that the tick-tock movement is done by this single handstick. **M 1**



M 1

Educationals

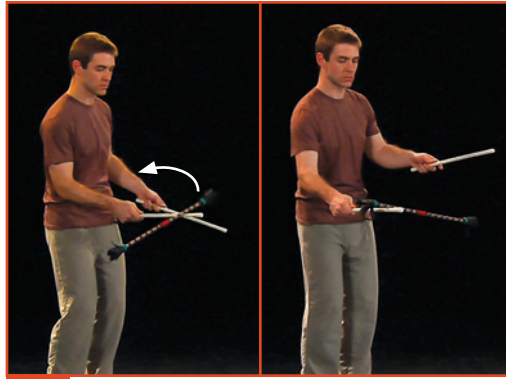
1. Perform the tick-tocks as slowly as possible. Slow down the stick. **ED 1**
2. Touch the stick with the right handstick, move the handstick to the left side, hit the stick to the right and bring the handstick back to the right side. Return to the tick-tock movement.
3. Perform the tick-tocks, make the pattern once with a single strike and return. Increase the number of strikes progressively. **ED 3**

Note: It is important to learn this movement progressively to master the whole sequence.





ED 1



ED 3

Common Mistakes

1. The participant hits the stick too hard with the handstick, and the stick becomes difficult to control.
2. The participant wants to move too quickly.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Controlling force and adjusting movements in accordance with the weight of the object handled.
2. Returning to Educational 2. Taking the time to learn the movement progressively.



FLOWER STICK BALANCING

Technical Element Description

Keeping the stick balancing vertically on the handstick.

Explanation of the Movement

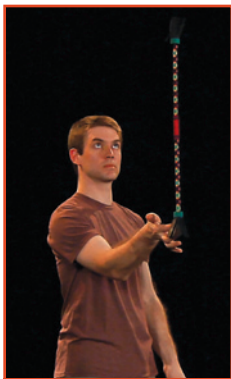
- Place the stick on the handstick vertically and keep it balanced.

Educational

1. Practise balancing the stick without the handsticks. Put the stick vertically on a finger and keep it balanced; gazing at the upper end of the stick helps in making the necessary corrections to the balance. **ED 1**

For example, if the stick leans forward, move the hand forward; if the stick leans back, pull the hand back. By looking at the upper end of the stick, one can see where it will tend to fall.

Perform the exercise with other objects, such as a broom. The longer the object, the easier it is to balance it.



ED 1



Common Mistakes

1. The stick is not vertical initially.
2. The corrective movements are too abrupt or too forceful.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure that the stick is perfectly vertical before starting the exercise. The instructor can help the participant by making sure the stick is very straight.
2. Being quick but gentle when making corrections. If the corrections are too forceful, the stick will have a tendency to go too far to the other side.

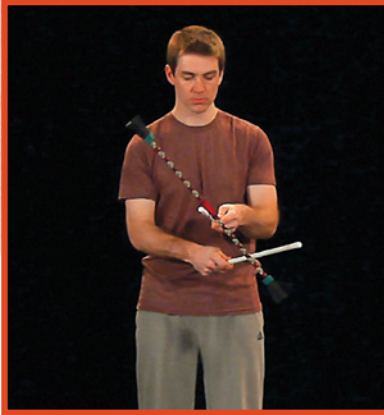
Always recentring the stick vertically.

Looking at the upper end of the stick and anticipating corrections.

Variant

1. Vertical balance with the handstick and the stick.





FLOWER STICK ROTATION AROUND THE HANDSTICK

Technical Element Description

Rotating the stick around one of the two handsticks during the tick-tocks.

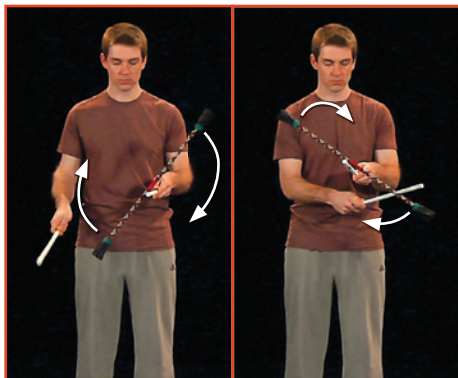
Prerequisite

- Tick-tocks.

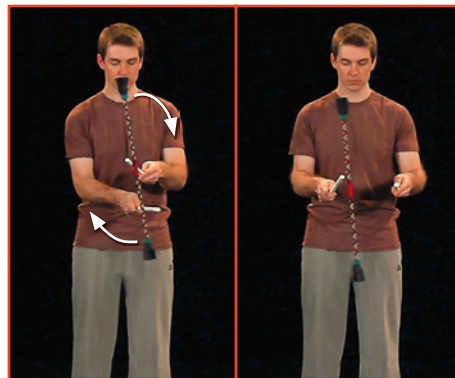
Explanation of the Movement

- Perform the tick-tock movement. Stop smoothly the stick near its middle on the left handstick; move the right handstick, under the left handstick, then above the stick. **M 1**
- Pull down with the right handstick while returning this handstick to its tick-tock position. At this moment, the stick will spin around the left handstick. Continue the tick-tocks. **M 2**
- Fully mastering stopping smoothly the stick leads to success with this movement.

Note: This pattern can be executed for both sides. The explanation given here applies to the left side.



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. Practise stopping smoothly: Perform the tick-tocks, stop the stick near its middle on one of the two handsticks, then try to keep it balanced for as long as possible before returning to the tick-tocks. **ED 1**

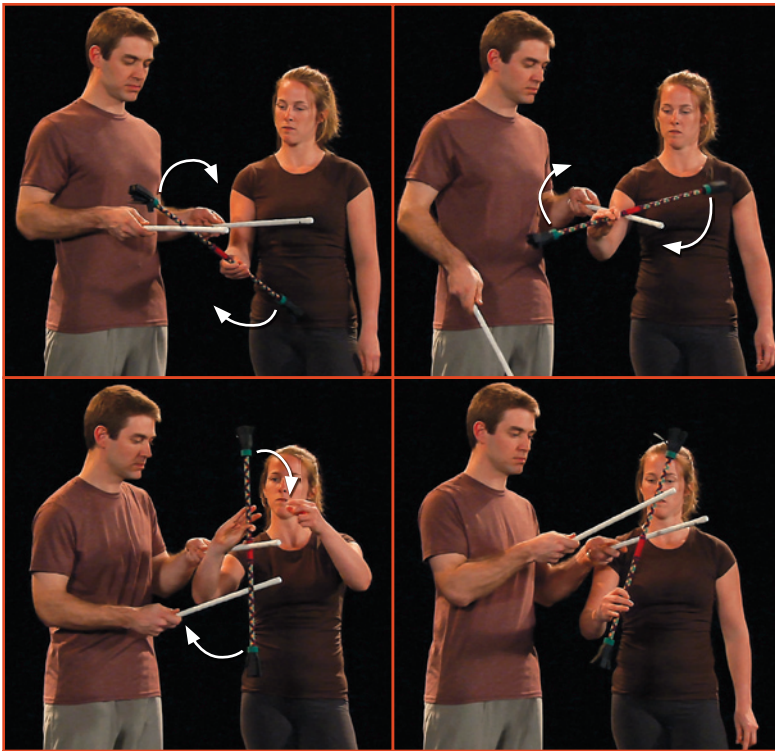
Stopping smoothly the stick closer to its middle will keep it horizontal. It will then be possible to keep it balanced for a longer period of time on the handstick.

2. With manual aid: The instructor manipulates the stick with his hands while the participant performs the handstick movements. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

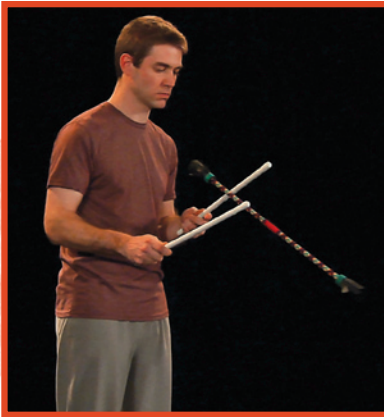
Common Mistakes

1. The participant cannot bring the right handstick over the stick.
2. The participant uses too much force when pulling down with the right handstick to make the stick spin around the left handstick.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure the stick is horizontal when it is stopped.
2. When the right handstick is above the stick, giving a small downward push and slowly returning the right handstick to the tick-tock position.





FLOWER STICK HELICOPTER SPIN

Technical Element Description

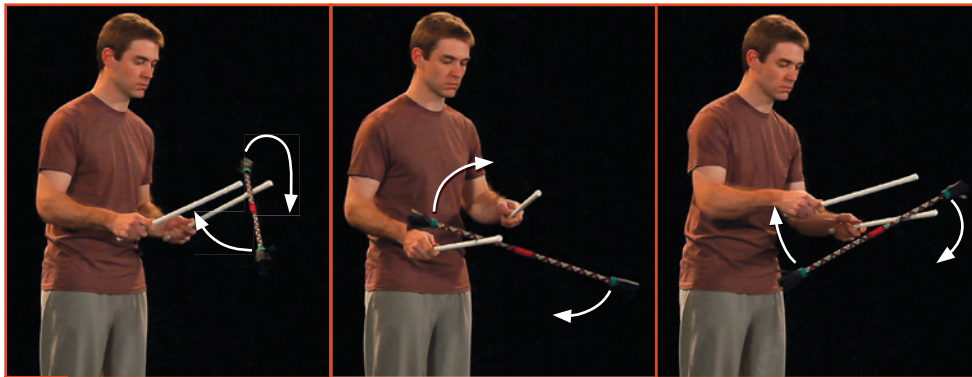
Rotating the flower stick around a horizontal plane.

Prerequisite

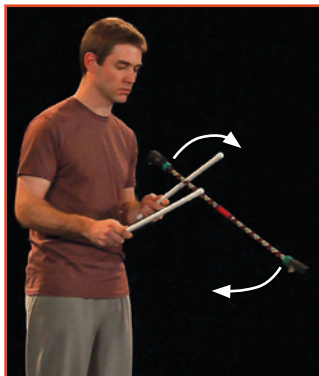
- Tick-tocks.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the tick-tocks, push lightly forward with the right handstick and pull lightly back with the left handstick. The stick will begin to turn horizontally. **M 1**
- Make sure the middle of the stick, which is the centre of gravity during the pattern, remains fixed as much as possible on the same point. During this element, the stick is almost always touching one of the two handsticks. **M 2**



M 1



M 2



Educationals

1. Perform the tick-tocks. Imagine a circle in a horizontal axis around the centre of the stick, both ends of the stick following the circumference of this circle. The handsticks must execute this movement by touching the stick between its middle and its ends.

The right handstick should make a semicircle toward the front, and the left handstick should make a semicircle toward the back.

2. From the tick-tocks, begin the helicopter spin, then return to tick-tocks. If the pattern does not work, return to the tick-tocks before the stick falls to the ground.

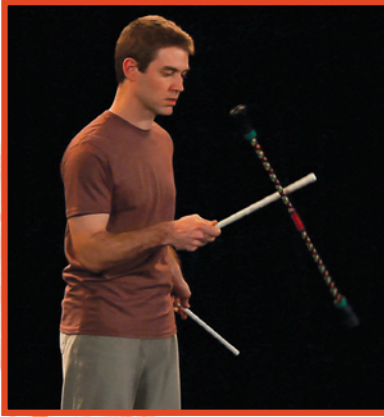
Common Mistakes

1. The participant moves the handsticks too much. The stick is propelled to the front or back.
2. The participant is unable to make the stick turn horizontally.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure the handsticks make a circular movement.
2. Bringing the stick horizontal little by little. The handsticks should touch the stick near its ends.





FLOWER STICK PROPELLERS

Technical Element Description

Rotating the stick vertically around one handstick.

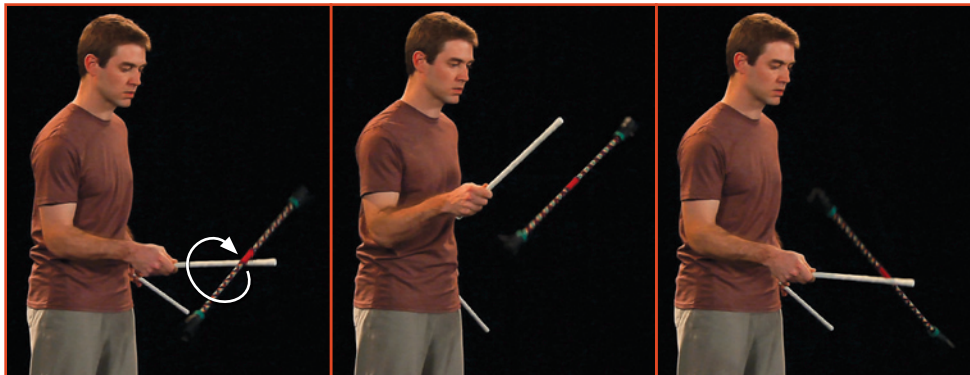
Prerequisites

- Tick-tocks.
- Half and full turns.
- Rotation around the handstick.

Explanation of the Movement

- Determine which hand will execute the movement and in which direction the propeller will rotate. For example, if the right hand is used, the propeller turns clockwise.
- Perform the tick-tocks. When the stick arrives on the right handstick, catch it just below its centre. Begin the rotation with a wrist movement in the clockwise direction. The right handstick supports the stick and makes it turn, mainly when it is below the middle of the stick. It completes the rotation at the top. **M 1**
- Control the rotation speed of the propeller; if it turns too quickly, it will become difficult to control.

Note: Propellers can be turned both to the left and to the right. Learning both sides is recommended. Wrist flexibility is key to making this pattern. This wrist movement not only aims at turning the stick, but will also give it the necessary support to keep it from falling.

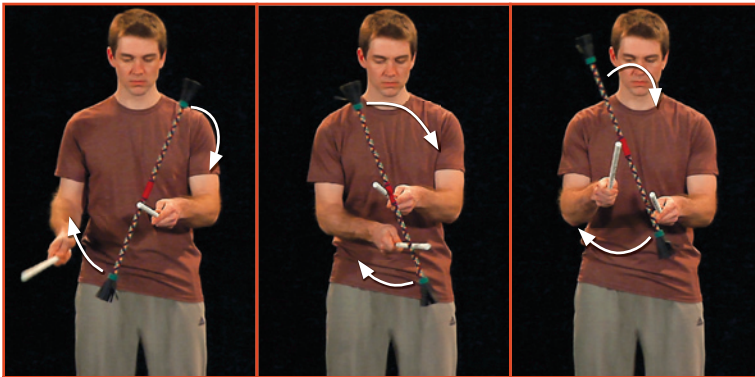


M 1



Educationals

1. Perform the spin around the handstick repeatedly, that is, spin the stick around a handstick by using the other handstick several times in a row. This movement will resemble the propeller without being one. **ED 1**
2. Practise the wrist movement without the stick. Hold the handstick pointed forward and repeat these small rotations of the wrist.



ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The handstick is too far from the centre of the stick; the stick is thrown instead of turned.
2. The stick always falls to the ground.
3. The stick turns faster and faster and the participant loses control.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making the movement holding the handstick very close to the middle of the stick. The rotations must be small.
2. The handstick that holds the stick must make the rotation and provide support.
3. Controlling the rotation and acceleration of the stick. One should be able to slow down the stick when it accelerates and not get carried away by the movement.

Variant

1. Horizontal propeller.



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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.

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