BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS

GROUP GAMES

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 Éloize and The 7 Fingers, and has lent a helping hand to numerous foreign circus companies.

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

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

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

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

Daniela Arendasova
Director of Studies
National Circus School
Montreal

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

Collaboration between National Circus School and *Cirque du Soleil*

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

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

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

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

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

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

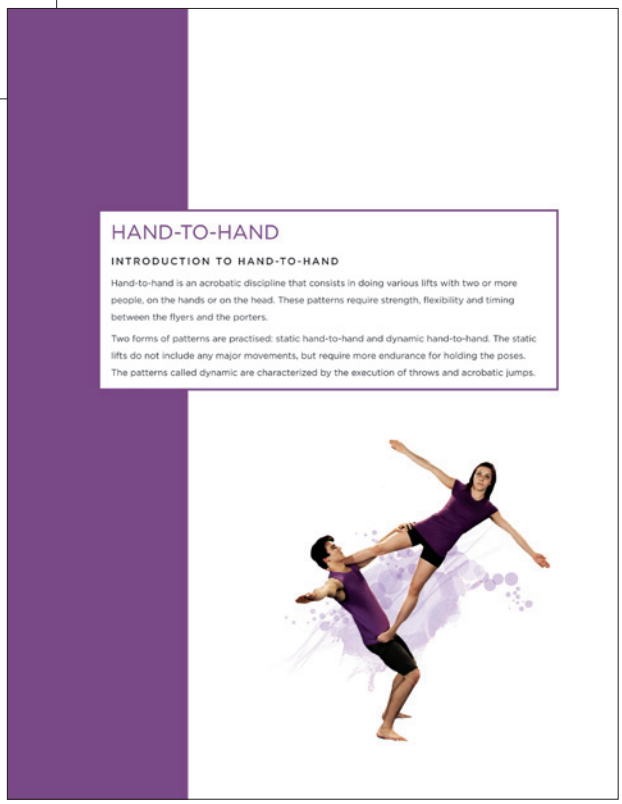
The written and video documents included in *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* are complementary: they were designed to be used together. The written documents contain information that is not available on the video documents. Likewise, the video documents allow a fuller understanding of the movements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

INSTRUCTIONS – WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Introduction

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

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



TERMINOLOGY

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

Closed foot
Position with the foot straight on the wire.

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

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

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

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

Wire
Cable on which one walks.

EQUIPMENT

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

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.

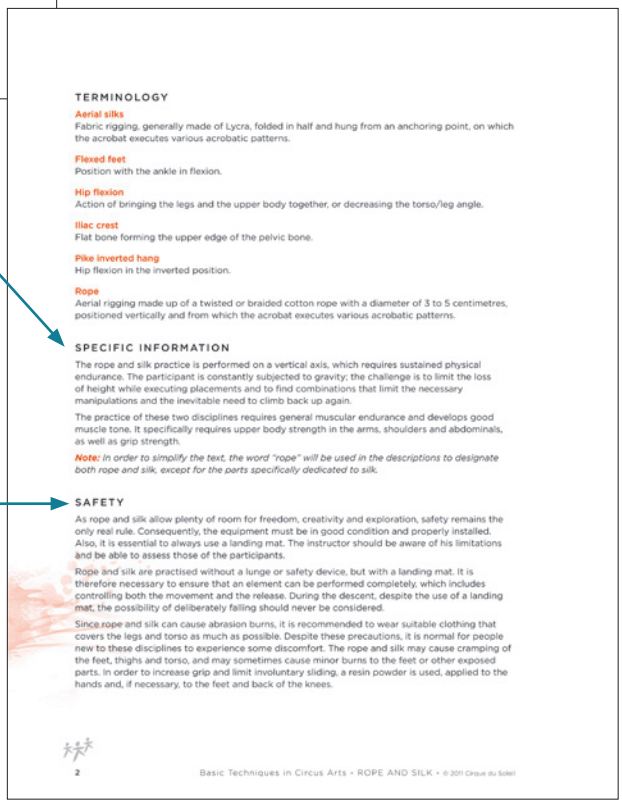
Specific Information

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.*

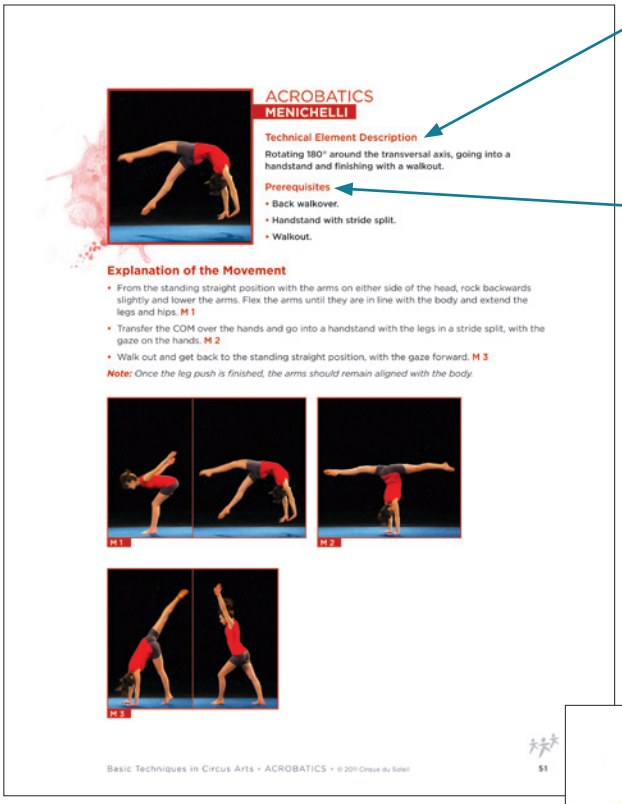
SAFETY

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



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

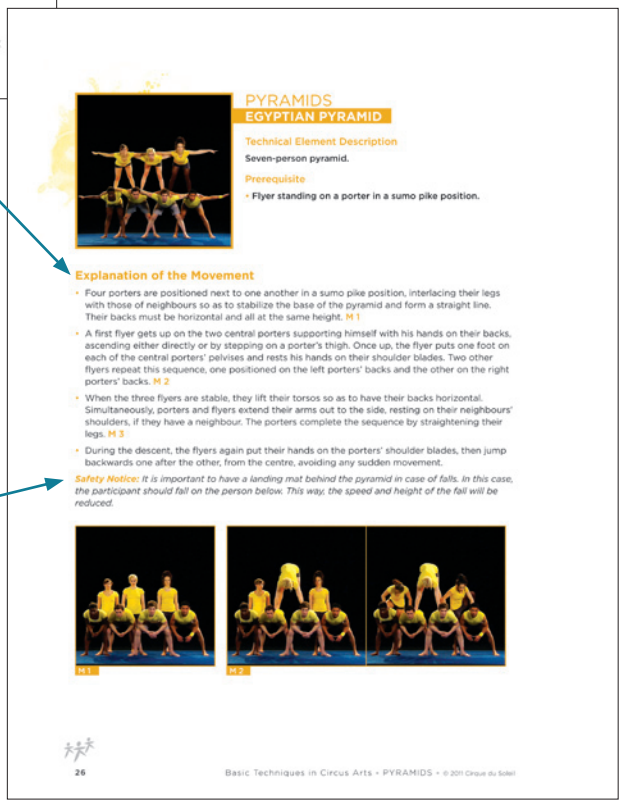
A detailed description of the different sequences of movements making up the element.

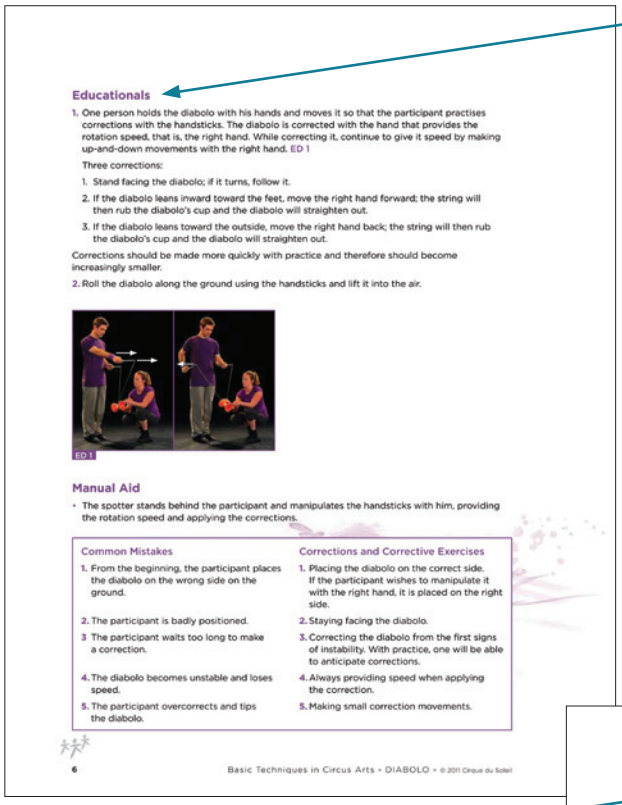
Identified by the icon **M**

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.





Educationals

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

Three corrections:

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

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

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

ED 1

Manual Aid

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

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

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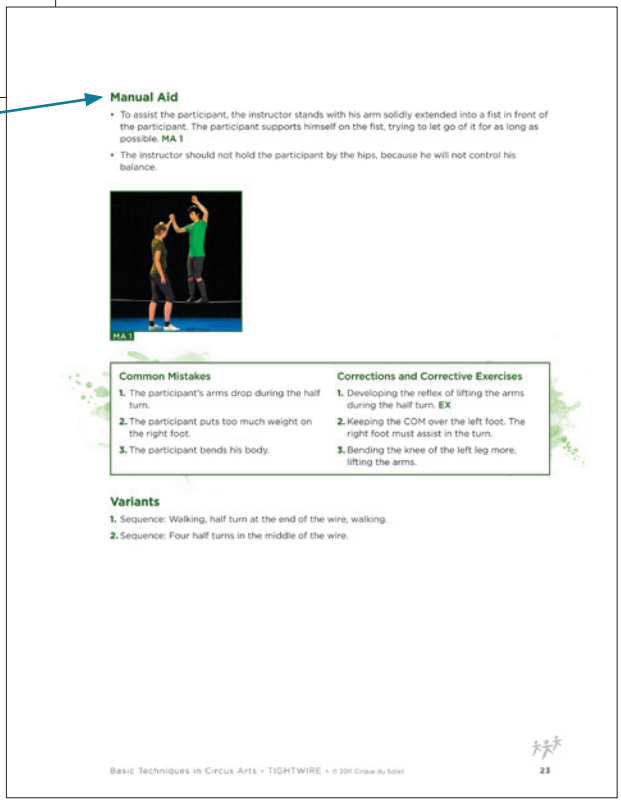
Educationals

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

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

MA 1

Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant's arms drop during the half turn.	1. Developing the reflex of lifting the arms during the half turn. 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.

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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.

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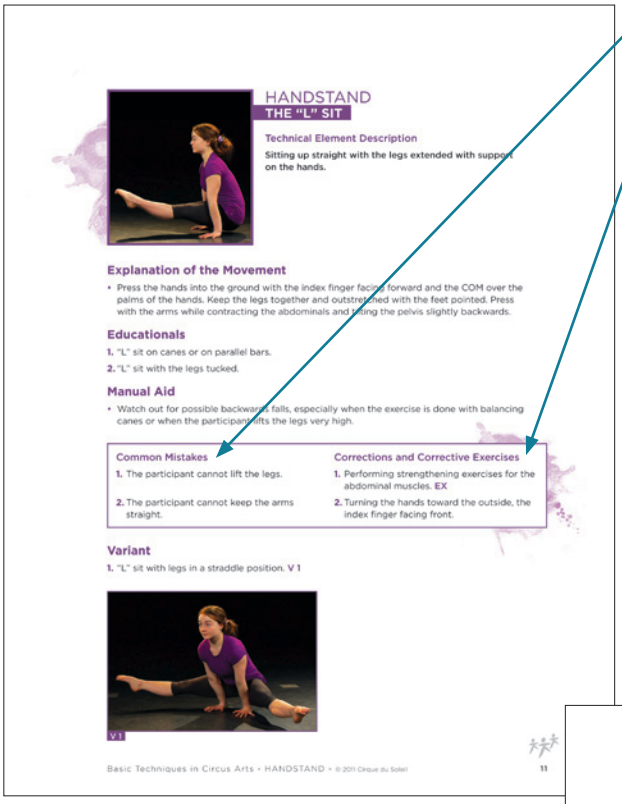


Common Mistakes

The most common mistakes to avoid.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

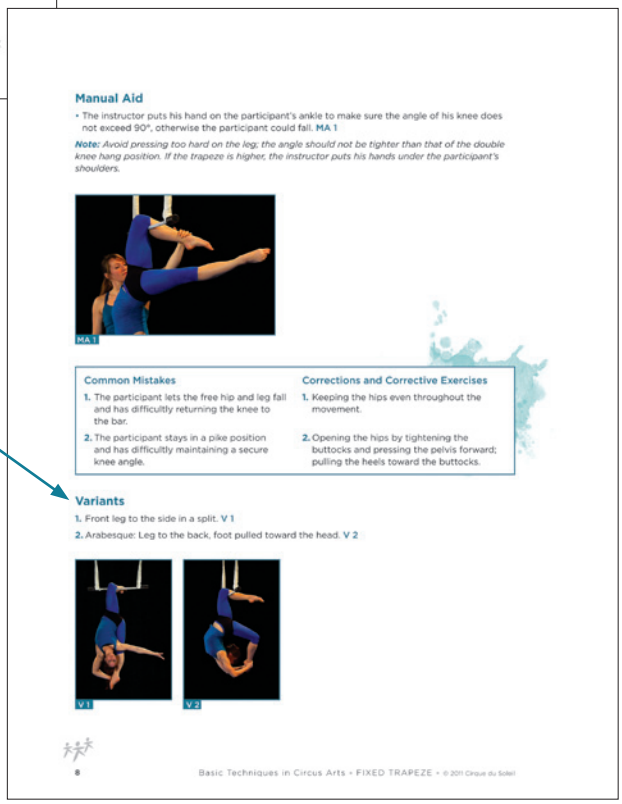
Modifications to make either by correcting movements or by corrective exercises.

The corrective exercises are identified by the icon **EX**

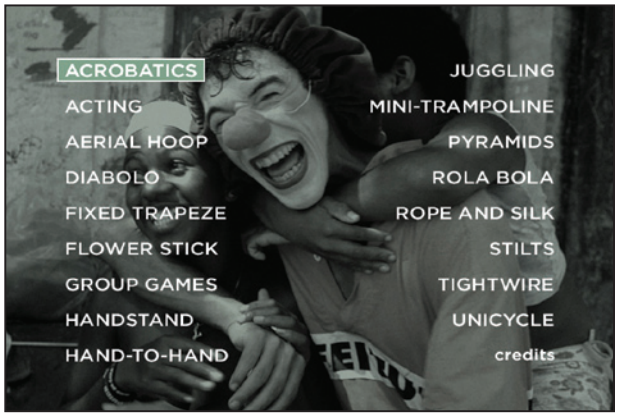
Variants

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

Identified by the icon **V**



INSTRUCTIONS – VIDEO DOCUMENTS

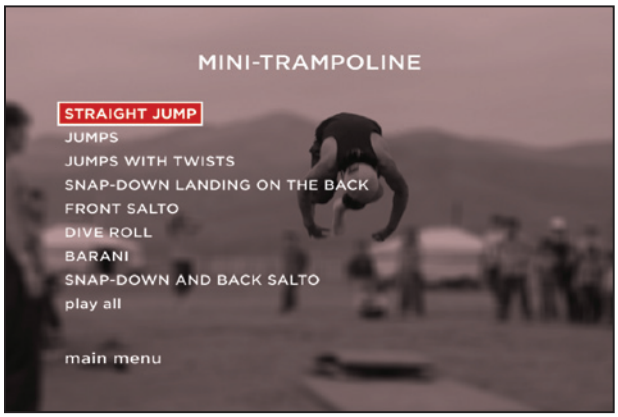


Main Menu

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.



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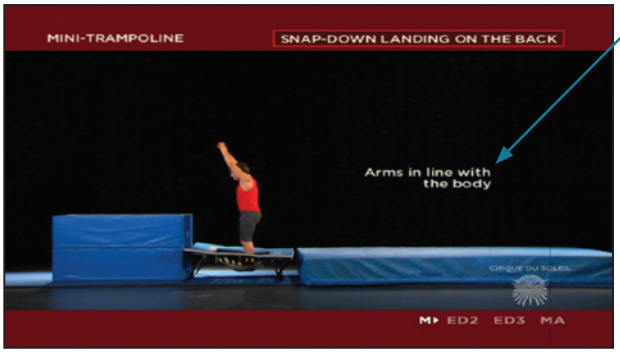
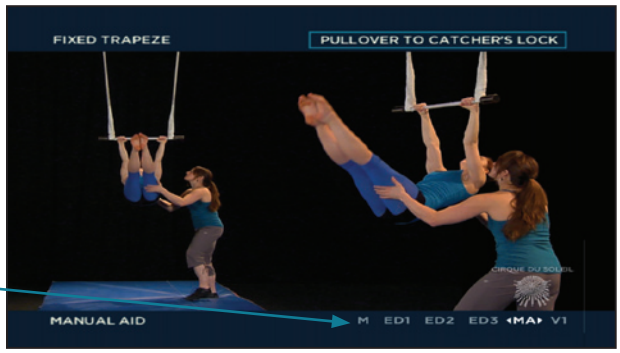


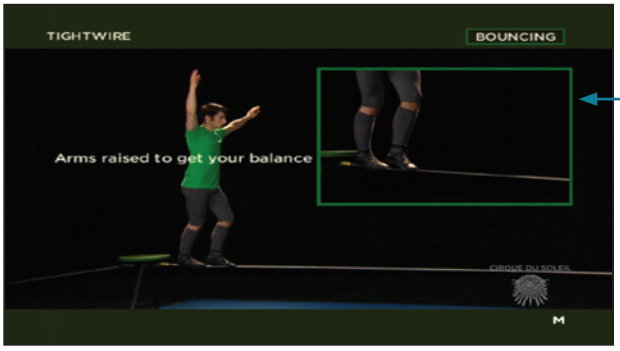
Warnings

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.

GROUP GAMES

INTRODUCTION TO GROUP GAMES

Group games promote bonding between participants during the creation of a new group. They provide a privileged space in which it is possible to experiment, take risks in a safe environment and develop a sense of belonging. They allow participants to reconnect with the carefree feeling of childhood. Group games can also add variety to warm-ups, which can quickly become repetitious. They are key facilitation tools for creating a dynamic environment that encourages reflection about a specific issue and that channels energy towards achieving a common goal.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

In order to successfully lead group games, certain key elements need to be considered:

- A good understanding of the reality of the group (age, physical and psychological condition) with which you are working is vital in order to evaluate the suitability and appropriateness of the game selected.
- A game will be well executed if the instructions are communicated correctly. The group's attention as well as time management, rhythm, ambience and content are essential.
- Ideally, quick and effective methods will be adopted for separating the participants into groups. For example:
  - Say, "At the signal, everyone run into one corner of the room!" The instructor adjusts uneven groups afterwards, if necessary.
  - Give everyone a number and then separate them into groups according to the number. If you want to have three groups, assign numbers from one to three.
- Games that are physically demanding should always be done after an appropriate warm-up. Also remember that a group can be made up of very different individuals who have various physical, psychomotor, psychological and social skills. Instructors should offer activities that will help everyone progress according to their level. The warm-up period is therefore not only useful but indispensable, since it encourages exploration, builds group spirit, helps participants get to know each other and gives them confidence, both physically and psychologically.

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GROUP GAMES
THE FLYING CARPET

Technical Element Description

Moving an individual using a group to carry him on outstretched arms.

This game is for developing confidence and cooperation and for becoming comfortable with contact.

Prerequisites

- **Doing exercises for becoming comfortable with contact that are less demanding in terms of touching.**
- **Doing arm-strengthening exercises.**
- **Playing games and doing exercises that develop teamwork and that introduce the ideas of porter and flyer, which are very important in hand-to-hand.**

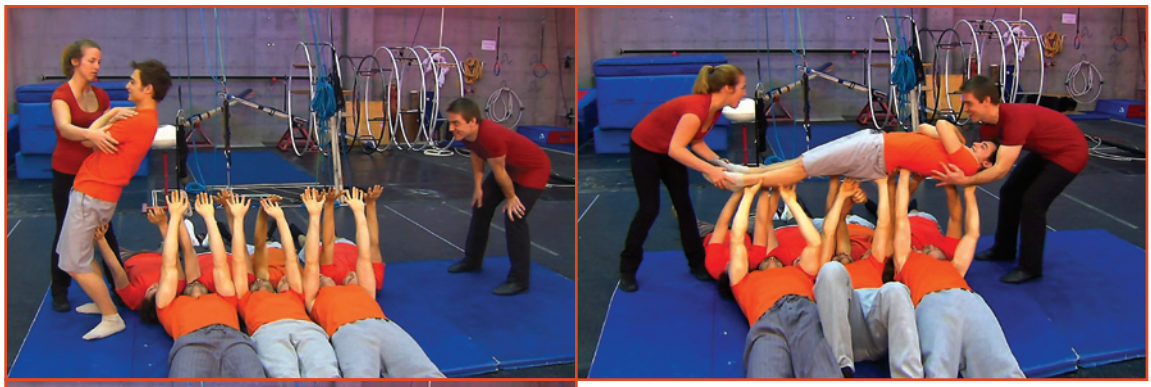
Explanation of the Movement

- Invite the participants to lie down on the floor, on their backs, their heads alongside one another, in alternating directions. Their heads will be in the centre, ear to ear, in a straight line, and the rest of their bodies will extend in opposite directions. M 1
- Hands in the air, make a carpet to hold someone. M 2
- A participant (the flyer) lies on his back on the carpet of hands; the outstretched participants (the porters) move him to the other side. The flyer must keep his body stiff and straight and let himself be carried by the porters. The instructor stands at the end to help him get up. M 3
- Once standing, the flyer should take a place on the floor at the end of the row, and the person at the beginning of the row goes next. Continue the relay like this. M 4

Safety Notice: *Be careful not to let the flyer fall. Touch respectfully. Make sure to catch the flyer when he reaches the end of the line. Since he will arrive headfirst, the instructor must catch him and help him stand.*

M 1

M 2



M 3

M 4

Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The porters do not properly support the flyer.	**1.** Explaining to the porters that they have a responsibility toward the flyer.
2. The porters' arms are not straight enough.	**2.** Making sure the participants understand that the exercise is easier with the arms straight than with the arms bent.
3. The porters go too quickly.	**3.** Slowing down the rhythm and manage better the timing of the flyer's moving.

Variant

1. Back-and-forth: Going back and forth with the flyer, so that the group cooperates to bring him back to the start.

GROUP GAMES
THE BLIND SCULPTOR

Technical Element Description

Reproducing a human statue from the body of a second participant, so as to obtain two identical figures.

This game is for developing confidence and creativity and for becoming comfortable with contact.

Prerequisites

- **Doing basic body awareness exercises.**
- **Creating conditions so that the participants feel comfortable.**

Explanation of the Movement

- Divide the group into teams of three.
- In each team, one of the participants is blindfolded: this is the blind sculptor. Another participant takes a fixed pose, which he maintains: this is the statue. The third participant will be the sculpting material. M 1
- The blind sculptor must memorize the position of the statue by touching it with his hands and then reproduce the statue using the sculpting material, i.e., the other person, to copy it as faithfully as possible. M 2
- When everyone has finished, the instructor invites the blind sculptors to remove their blindfolds. They can then see which sculptor copied his statue most faithfully.
- Then they can change roles.

Notes: *The question of touch is often delicate. Some people do not like to be touched, especially by a person of the opposite sex. This game is not recommended when the participants do not know each other well. If anyone does not want to participate, encourage them to try, but do not insist. A participant who wants to withdraw can do so at any time if he feels uncomfortable during the activity. The leader-instructor must decide on the appropriate time to propose this game. He must understand the degree of progress of his group well.*

PRECAUTIONS

- Favouring simple figures.
- Respecting teammates.
- Touching respectfully.
- Properly managing the time allocated to the sculpture so that everyone finishes at the same time.

M 1

M 2

Common Mistakes

1. The positions are too complicated to copy.
2. The participants go too fast and do not copy correctly.

Corrections and Corrective exercices

1. Simplifying the pose.
2. Slowing down. It is not a race.

Variant

1. Guardian angel: A fourth person can guide the sculptor in order to adjust his touch, to make sure it is respectful and to help recognize the pose.

GROUP GAMES
THE TRIO GETS CARRIED AWAY

Technical Element Description

Moving around while passing a ball in trios.

This game develops cooperation and concentration and also serves as a warm-up exercise.

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor asks the participants to get into groups of three.
- Each team gets a ball. The goal of the game is to spread out as much as possible in space and throw the ball between the members of the trio. The participants can never stay in the same place, they must be constantly moving. M 1
- After a certain amount of time, change the teams to form new trios.

PRECAUTIONS

- Watching out for collisions.
- Not throwing the ball too hard or blindly to avoid injuries and to keep the game flowing.
- Making it clear to the teams that they must maintain control of their ball. Participants should not spend too much time running after the ball.
- Making sure all the participants are included in the game.

M 1

Common Mistake

1. The throws are too hard and lack precision.

Correction and Corrective Exercise

1. Doing exercises that allow experimenting with different types of throws, their precision and contact with others. EX

Variants

1. Changing speed or slowing down.
2. Various movements: Passing while jumping, exchanging with a stop, lying on the floor after every throw, etc.
3. Making a noise or yelling when the ball hits that of another trio.
4. Balls of various sizes, such as a beach ball, a regular ball or a small rubber ball. Each trio can have a different ball.

GROUP GAMES
THE MACHINE

Technical Element Description

Starting with a sequence of individual movements, relating these movements with the movements of other participants in order to constitute a human machine.

This game is for developing cooperation, awareness and creativity.

Prerequisite

- **Developing a certain degree of awareness among the members of the group.**

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor invites the participants, individually or in groups of three, to do a movement accompanied by a noise. The first participant does his movement, and the others take turns grafting on their own movement to form a sequence and make up the machine. M 1
- Divide into subgroups if the group is large. The recommended maximum number is eight to 10 people.

PRECAUTIONS

- Making simple and short movements with a beginning and an end.
- The instructor must properly manage the duration of the exercise.

M 1

Common Mistakes

1. There is a lack of awareness and concentration.
2. Some participants change their movement.
3. One or more participants are not part of the common movement; they are not grafted to the group.
4. The movement is too difficult to maintain for the complete duration of the exercise.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Repeating the exercise.
2. Making sure the participants maintain the same movement throughout the exercise.
3. Making sure all the movements are linked. Asking the participant to correct his own sequence, if necessary.
4. Choosing a movement that is easy to maintain throughout the exercise.

Variants

1. Variation of the machine's rhythm.
2. Silently or with louder sounds.
3. Expansive or exaggerated movements.

GROUP GAMES
SHARK ISLAND

Technical Element Description

Movement of participants from island to island without being eaten by the shark.

This game is for developing concentration and timing and can be a warm-up exercise.

Prerequisite

- **Doing a warm-up to avoid injury.**

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor determines an area for the game and defines three spaces by means of gymnastic mats or ropes representing the islands.
- Everyone is asked to get on the islands except for one participant, who will be the shark. M 1
- At the instructor's signal, all the participants must change islands while avoiding being tagged by the shark. They are safe when they are on an island. M 2
- The shark must try to "eat" the participants by touching them, like in tag. When someone is tagged, he must acknowledge it and tell him that he has become a shark himself and must eat the others. M 3
- The game ends when everyone is a shark. The game can be started over by designating a new shark.

Safety Notice: *Watch out for collisions and moderate the competitive spirit of the participants to keep the game at an enjoyable intensity.*

M 1

M 2

M 3

Common Mistakes

1. The speed of the game accelerates so much that participants lose site of the goal.
2. The islands are not at the right distance; they are too close or too far away.
3. Some participants cheat.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Slowing down.
2. Adjusting the distances according to the profile of the participants. This will determine the degree of difficulty and the effectiveness of the game.
3. The instructor must play the role of referee.

Variant

1. Sharks hand in hand: In order to make it easier for the participants when there are a lot of sharks, ask the sharks to hold hands, which will slow them down. This will extend the game and prolong the suspense.

GROUP GAMES
SCHOOL OF FISH

Technical Element Description

Copying a leader's movement by a group to amplify the impact.

This game is for developing awareness, cooperation and performance skills.

Explanation of the Movement

First Part

- The instructor asks the participants to move as close together as possible to form a school of fish. M 1
- The instructor designates a leader who stands in front of the group and begins to move. He does a simple sequence of movements and the whole group copies the same sequence as faithfully as possible and at the same rhythm, giving the impression of a single well-synchronized movement. M 2
- At the beginning, the leader makes simple and slow movements. Later, speech, noises and body expressions can be added.
- The instructor names a new leader who starts over in one corner to continue the game, and so on.

Note: *It is important to be very attentive to the leader's movement and to be synchronized with all the participants around oneself. The leader should always face away from the group and be visible to all the members.*

Second Part

- The instructor divides the group into two and designates a leader for each half.
- The exercise proceeds as follows:

  a) The leader of the first group executes a movement and the group copies the same movement;

  b) The leader of the second group responds with a new movement and his group repeats it;

  c) The first group responds to the second by doing another movement, and so on;

  d) Both groups must find an ending for their little choreography. M 3

PRECAUTIONS

- Making sure each group has a leader.
- Favouring simple movements.

M 1

M 2

M 3

Common Mistakes

1. The group does not give the leader enough time to finish his movements.
2. The leader does not give a clear signal at the beginning and end of his sequence.
3. The group does not copy the sequence exactly. Any change takes away from the desired impact.
4. The leader is always the same person.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Reminding the group to wait for the leader to finish his movement.
2. Asking the leader not to make more than three small movements.
3. Copying the leader's gestures and noises as faithfully and energetically as possible.

   Filming the group so that the participants can observe and evaluate.
4. Making sure each participant has a chance to lead the group.

Variants

1. Response with observers: If the group is too large, the instructor designates four groups. Two of them will give the response, while the other two will be observers.
2. Alternating the leader: Spontaneously, a group member proposes an alternate leader.

GROUP GAMES
STICKS

Technical Element Description

Connecting two participants by means of a stick.

This game is for developing awareness, creativity and cooperation.

Explanation of the Movement

- Hold a stick about 50 to 80 centimetres long by the ends between two fingers. Move the stick around without dropping it in order to discover the various possible movements. M 1
- The exercise is done in groups of two. Face to face, the participants hold two sticks, each being held at one end by one participant and at the other end by the other participant. They must move the sticks around, exploring the movement possibilities. M 2
- Repeat the exercise in groups of three, then four, and then the whole group at once. M 3
- By observing the participants, the instructor can discover movements that can be used to create choreographies, dances and new hand-to-hand patterns, or that can be used for future presentations.

Note: *This is a very good exercise for introducing awareness of others and for developing synchrony.*

PRECAUTIONS

- Not gripping or pinching the sticks.
- Staying aware of others.
- The instructor must make sure to fully explain the game before distributing the sticks so that the participants are not distracted.

M 1

M 2

M 3

Common Mistakes

1. The participants go too fast and drop the stick.
2. The participants make movements that are too complex.
3. The participants are not aware of each other.
4. The participants all want to be the movement leaders.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure the participants understand that the goal is to not drop the stick.
2. Asking for fluid and less demanding movements.
3. Practising the exercise first with one stick and two participants so participants feel comfortable and experienced with this game of pressure and movement.
4. Working on sharing and on alternating leadership.

Variants

1. Rhythm and music: This exercise can easily be accompanied by music.
2. Different types of sticks – larger, longer and even lit or fluorescent if used in the dark – to increase the level of difficulty.

GROUP GAMES
PICTURE TRIO

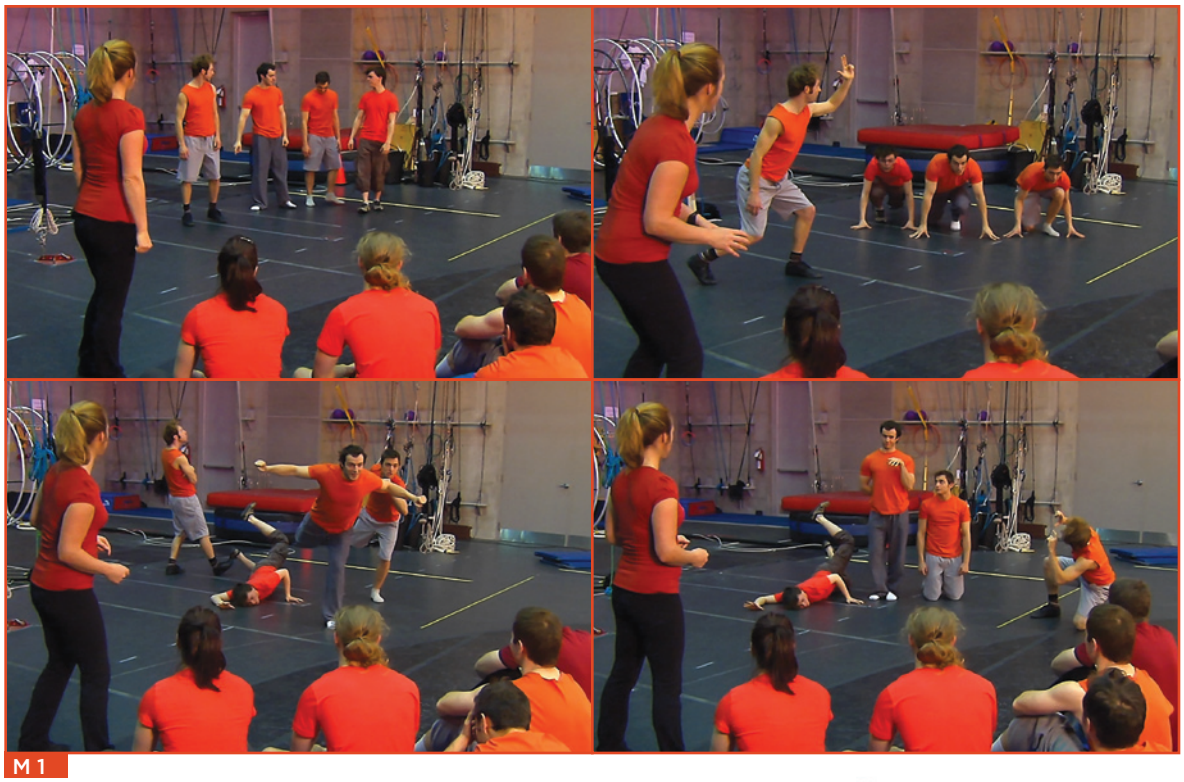
Technical Element Description

Creating three pictures to compose a story.

This game is for developing creativity, teamwork and performance skills.

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor divides the group into three teams.
- Each team has a few minutes to prepare a story made up of three pictures representing a beginning, a middle part and an end. The picture is an idea, topic or image that they can try to express by a position and an attitude. It is a distinct moment, as if it were a photo. They are photos that the participants make physically by holding a particular pose.
- Each team is invited to present its story.
- The instructor asks the first team to show its story. Between each picture, the instructor asks the spectators to close their eyes a few seconds while the team adopts a new pose. He then asks the spectators to open their eyes and look at the scene for a few seconds and then to close their eyes again. M 1
- The exercise is repeated for each picture and this sequence is repeated for all the teams.
- After one team's sequence, the instructor asks the spectators to give their interpretation of the story, what it means to them.
- Then, the team explains what it intended. A new team then takes over and presents its story.



M 1

Common Mistakes

1. The pictures are not clear or well-defined.
2. The participants choose positions that are difficult to maintain.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Creating very distinct moments, with a beginning, a middle part and an end. Making sure to have fixed points and not to move.
2. Not including difficult positions in the sequence. Favouring positions that are easy to hold.

Variants

1. Physical representations of what the other team looked like.
2. The story reinvented by the observer group.
3. Multiple pictures: Ask the teams to insert additional pictures between the existing ones, which is a good method to create a story.
4. Improvisation proposals: According to the improvisation approach, develop interactions among the groups.

GROUP GAMES
THE ROPE CIRCLE

Technical Element Description

Forming a circle while holding a rope stretched tight.

This game is for developing cooperation, awareness and timing.

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor asks the participants to form a circle.
- Standing, the participants hold the rope with both hands. M 1
- At the instructor's signal, everyone rocks slowly backwards, arms extended, feet on the floor, in a synchronized manner and with the weight well distributed around the rope. M 2
- Staying synchronized, ask the participants to sit down at the same time, without too much force. After this, ask them to try getting up the same way. M 3

Safety Notice: *Use a safe rope, preferably a rope used for lunges. Make sure the knot is reliable and strong. Tell the participants not to let go without warning.*

M 1

M 2

M 3

Common Mistakes

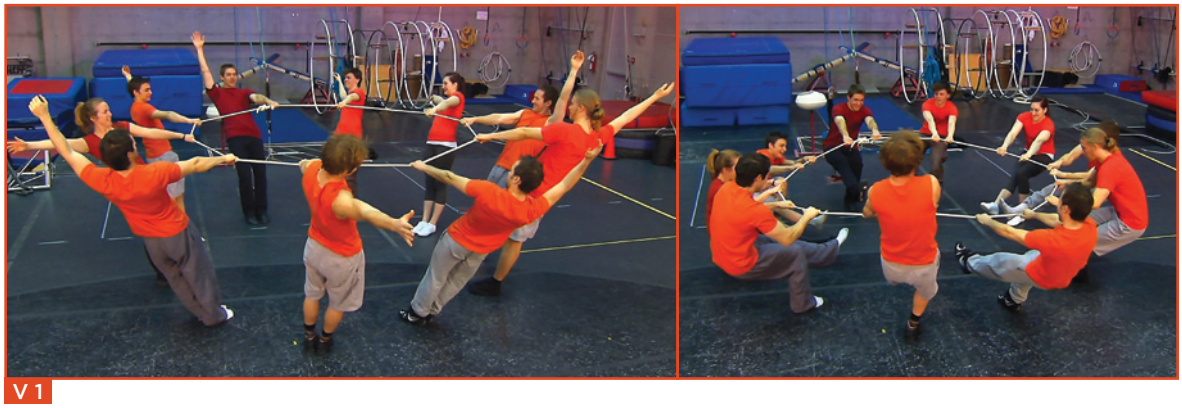
1. The participants are not synchronized.
2. The participants execute the movements too rapidly.
3. The participants' weight is not properly distributed around the circle, or the participants are not at the right distance, they are too close together or too far apart.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Stopping the exercise and resynchronizing.
2. Slowing down. The participants must remain aware and adapt to the group's movements.
3. Making sure the participants are properly distributed around the rope, everyone placed at an equal distance from one another.

Variant

1. One hand, one foot: When the group is in sync, the participants hold the rope and do the exercise with only one hand or only one foot. V 1



V 1

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

FONDATION CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™

In collaboration with

National Circus School
MONTREAL

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