

BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



JUGGLING



FONDATION
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

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

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FOREWORD

NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

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

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

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

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

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

Daniela Arendasova
Director of Studies
National Circus School
Montreal



INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

Collaboration between National Circus School and *Cirque du Soleil*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



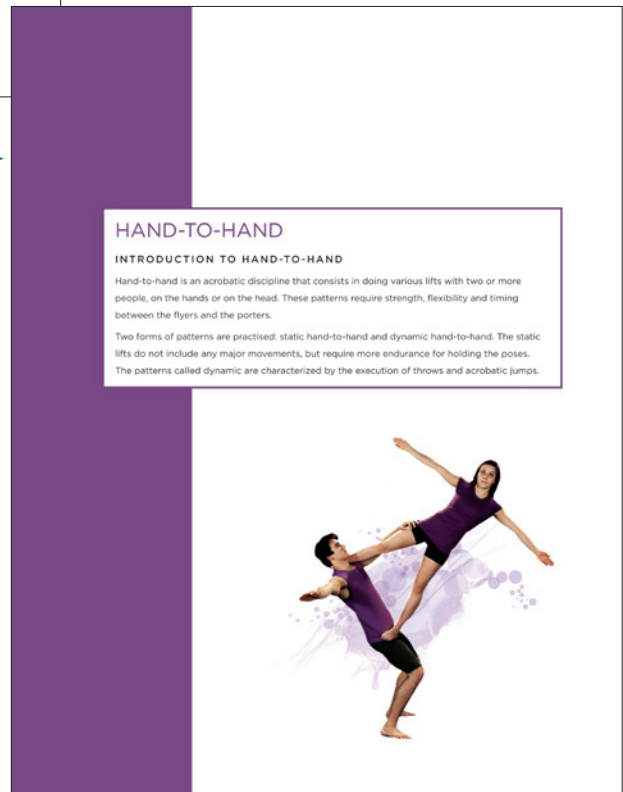
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



Introduction

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

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



TERMINOLOGY

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

Closed foot
Position with the foot straight on the wire.

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

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

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

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

Wire
Cable on which one walks.

EQUIPMENT

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



Side cables A-frame

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

Terminology

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

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

Equipment

The equipment needed to practise the different disciplines covered.

Specific Information

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

Safety

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

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

TERMINOLOGY

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

Flexed feet
Position with the ankle in flexion.

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

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

Pike inverted hang
Hip flexion in the inverted position.

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

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

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

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

SAFETY

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

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

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

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



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.

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HANDSTAND
THE "L" SIT

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



Explanation of the Movement

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

Educationals

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


Manual Aid

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

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

Variant

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



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

Common Mistakes

The most common mistakes to avoid.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

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

The corrective exercises are identified by the icon EX

Variants


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

Identified by the icon V

Manual Aid

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



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



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

Variants

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

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



INSTRUCTIONS - VIDEO DOCUMENTS

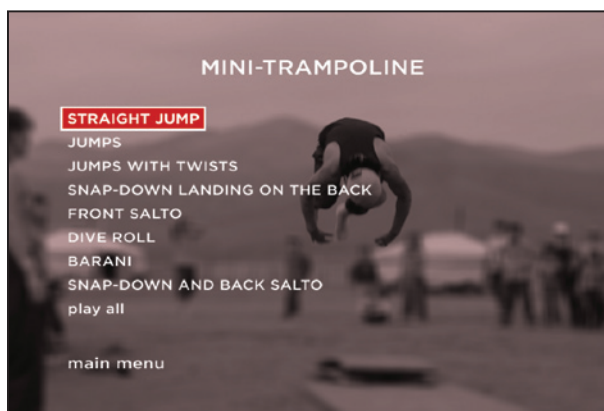


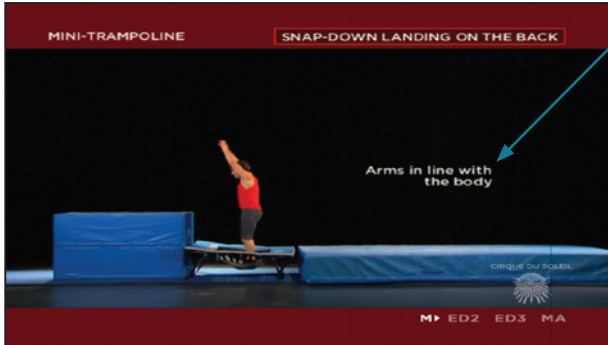
Main Menu

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.



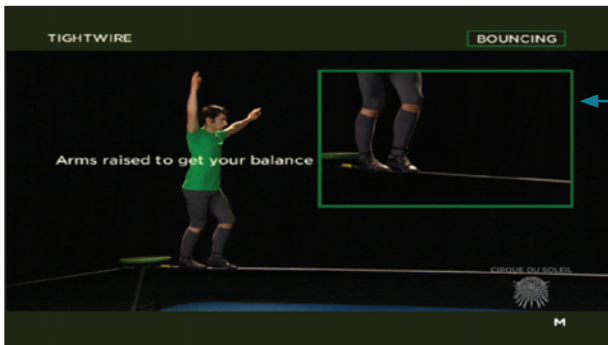


Warnings

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.



JUGGLING

INTRODUCTION TO JUGGLING

Juggling is a game of skill that consists in continuously throwing and catching various objects in a fluid movement and with precise gestures. Both the number of objects thrown and the number of jugglers working together can vary. Juggling is one of the fundamental disciplines of the circus arts.

Learning to juggle with different objects contributes to the development of coordination and body awareness, as well as to a sense of rhythm and creativity.



TERMINOLOGY

Absorbing a ball

Action of gradually slowing the speed of the ball when it is caught.

Beanbag-type aerial balls

Leather or cloth bags filled with beans or plastic beads.

Bouncing balls

Bouncing balls, normally made of rubber or silicone, used in patterns with bounces.

Cascade

Juggling pattern in which the balls move from one side to the other while criss-crossing, along a parabola-shaped trajectory.

Column

Pattern in which the balls are thrown straight up in a synchronized, regular back-and-forth hand movement.

Dead point

Period of time between the moment when a thrown object stops rising and when it starts its descent. This period of time is also called "apogee."

High throw

Throw whose height reaches 1.5 to 2 metres above the head. This type of throw increases the amplitude of movements, slows the rhythm of the throws and facilitates the execution of a full turn and various body movements.

Imaginary square

An imaginary representation of a square whose two lower corners are made up of the hands and whose top corners are the upper limits inside which the balls are thrown. The trajectory of a throw from one hand to the other should form two axes. The first, which represents the diagonal of the square, is formed by the transverse movement of the ball, from the lower corner to the opposite upper corner. The second axis, which draws the side of the square, is formed by the vertical drop of the ball from the upper corner, where it reaches its dead point, to the lower corner, where it is caught. Thus, in a continuous exchange movement, the trajectory of the ball forms a figure 8.

Parabola

Juggling throw formed by the movement of a ball from one hand to the other in a bell-shaped trajectory upward and to the inside, whose upper end is the dead point.

Shower

Juggling pattern creating a continuous-circle movement.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The technical elements emphasize body position, precision in throwing and catching, consistency of rhythm and fluidity of movements.

In order to develop balanced coordination, it is important to work by alternating the right hand and the left hand from the first throws. The aim is to acquire a precise throw, that is, in a trajectory and parabolic form whose speed and height are constant regardless of the hand doing the throwing.



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JUGGLING

THREE-BALL CASCADE

Technical Element Description

Pattern with three balls with criss-crossing throws.



Explanation of the Movement

- Standing, take two balls in the right hand and another one in the left hand with the arms shoulder-width apart and the elbows bent to an angle of approximately 90°.
- Throw one ball from the right hand upward and to the inside in a parabolic trajectory. The ball should go as high as the face. When the ball reaches its dead point, throw the ball from the left hand so that it is free to catch the first ball. When the second ball reaches its dead point, throw the third ball from the right hand, and so on. **M 1**
- While throwing, the forearm movements should make a circle in a continuous movement and constant rhythm.

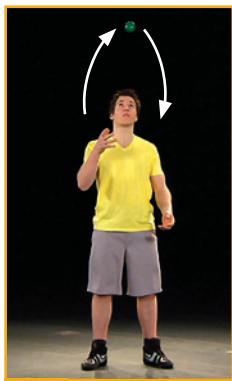


M 1

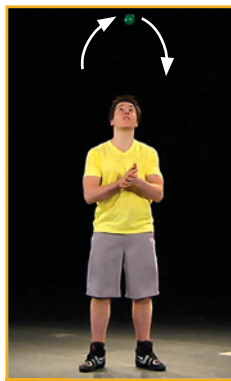


Educationals

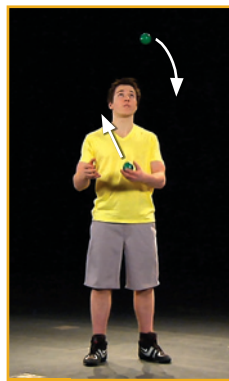
1. Throw a ball upward and to the inside in a parabolic trajectory a little higher than the head and using only the forearms. It is important to properly absorb the force of the balls when catching them in order to ensure fluidity of movement. **ED 1**
2. Make high throws and clap the hands each time the ball is in the air, being careful to absorb the force of the balls when catching them. Once these throws are mastered, the degree of difficulty can be raised by increasing the number of claps or making them in front and behind the body. The type of throws can also be varied by throwing the ball under the legs or arms, behind the back and around the shoulders. **ED 2**
3. Hold a ball in each hand, throw one ball to the other hand in a parabolic trajectory and, when it reaches its dead point, throw the other ball. In order to keep a regular rhythm, the participant may count while throwing the balls. **ED 3**
4. Hold a ball in each hand and throw both balls at the same time and to the same height, a little higher than the head, without crossing them. Throw alternately from the right hand and the left hand while slapping the thigh after each throw. **ED 4**
5. Practise Educational 3 and 4 while visualizing the imaginary square.



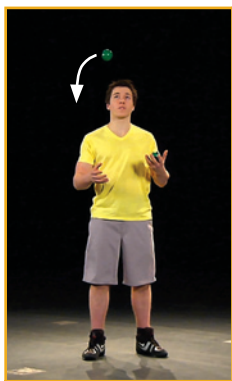
ED 1



ED 2



ED 3



ED 4



Common Mistakes

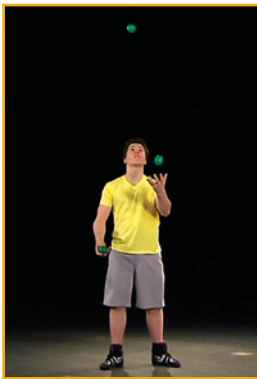
1. The participant throws the ball too far to the front or back.
2. The throws are not to the same height.
3. The catches are too abrupt and too tight, and lack fluidity.
4. The participant throws the balls with too much force and his movements lack lightness.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Juggling in front of a wall to make sure the balls are properly thrown vertically. **EX**
2. Determining two points of reference situated at the same height, slightly above the head. Taking a ball in each hand and throwing the balls at the same time, making sure the dead point of each ball corresponds to the reference points. **EX**
3. Holding a ball in each hand and making high throws while paying special attention to absorbing the force when catching the balls. **EX**
4. Reminding the participant to adjust the force of his throws to the weight of the object.
Holding a ball in each hand and making high throws while paying special attention to the smoothness and lightness of the movement. **EX**

Variant

1. Three-ball cascade with high throws. **V 1**



V 1





JUGGLING

THREE-BALL HALF CASCADE

Technical Element Description

Pattern with three balls, one hand in cascade, the other in reverse cascade.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the three-ball cascade pattern, go to reverse cascade by making half-circle throws to the outside with one of the hands. **M 1**



M 1

Educationals

1. Hold a ball in each hand, and then throw one ball in a parabolic trajectory as in the cascade. Throw the ball across from the other hand, making a half circle to the outside. **ED 1**
2. While executing a three-ball cascade, integrate a half-cascade throw, then return to the initial pattern.
3. Repeat Educational 2 while gradually increasing the number of throws in half cascade until the pattern is stable.





ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The balls collide.
2. The ball comes to the centre or the same side, when it should come to the shoulder opposite the hand that threw the half cascade.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. While juggling two balls, increasing the movement of the hand making the half cascade. **EX**
2. Increasing the movement of the hand making the half cascade, and paying special attention to the force of the throw.





JUGGLING

THREE-BALL REVERSE CASCADE

Technical Element Description

Three-ball pattern with the hands in reverse cascade.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball half cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

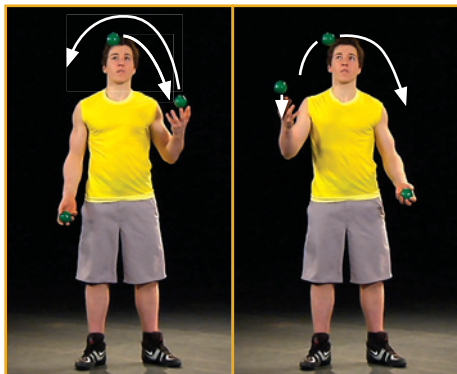
- From the three-ball cascade pattern, go to a reverse cascade and make half-circle throws to the outside with both hands, beginning with the right hand. **M 1**



M 1

Educational

1. Juggle in half cascade while alternating the left hand and the right hand. **ED 1**



ED 1





Common Mistake

1. The balls collide.

Correction and Corrective Exercise

1. Increasing the movement of both hands so that the half circle is wide enough to the outside.



JUGGLING HALF TURN



Technical Element Description

Half turn and return to the pattern during a three-ball cascade.

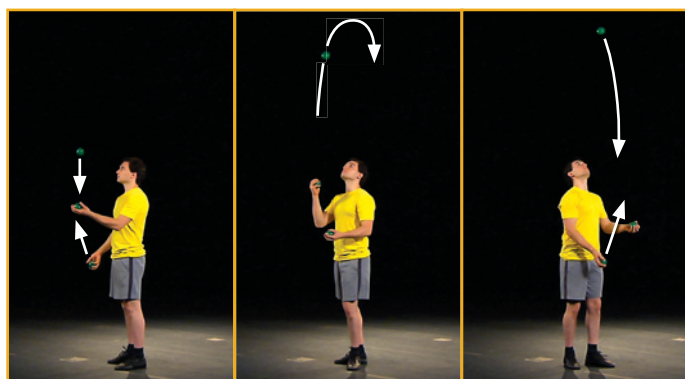
Prerequisites

- Three-ball cascade.
- Juggling with high throws.

Explanation of the Movement

- From a three-ball cascade, throw a ball to the back, 1.5 to 2 metres above the head, in an arc trajectory. Make a fast half turn and catch the ball with the hand that threw it, and then continue to juggle in cascade. **M 1**

Note: If the participant throws the ball from the right hand, he must turn to the left side, and vice versa.

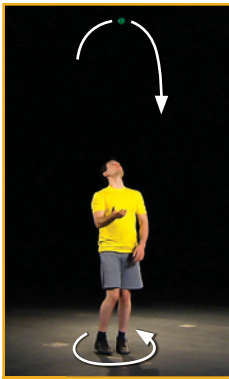


M 1

Educationals

1. Throw a ball to the back, 1.5 to 2 metres above the head, make a half turn and catch the ball with the same hand. **ED 1**
2. Hold two balls in one hand, throw one ball to the back, 1.5 to 2 metres above the head, make a half turn, throw the other ball and catch the first ball with the same hand, and then catch the second ball with the other hand. **ED 2**

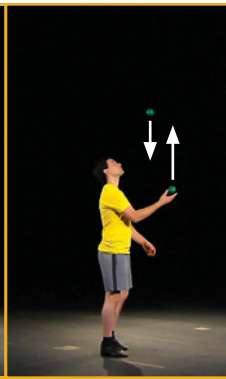




ED 1



ED 2



Common Mistakes

1. The throw to the back is insufficient or excessive.
2. The participant does not have enough time to catch the ball after the half turn.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Throwing a ball to the back, making a half turn and catching the ball with the same hand while paying special attention to the trajectory. **EX**
2. Increasing the height of the throw or increasing the speed of the half turn, or both.





JUGGLING FULL TURN

Technical Element Description

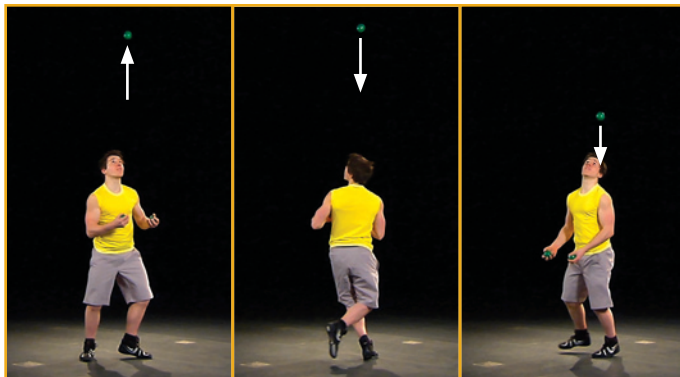
360° horizontal turn and return to the pattern during a three-ball cascade.

Prerequisites

- Three-ball cascade.
- Juggling with high throws.

Explanation of the Movement

- Juggle with three balls in cascade, throw a ball 1.5 to 2 metres above the head, make a 360° horizontal turn, catch the ball with the other hand and return to the cascade. **M 1**



M 1

Educational

1. Throw a ball 1.5 to 2 metres above the head, make a full turn and catch the ball with the other hand.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not have enough time to catch the ball after the full turn.
2. The throw is insufficient or excessive.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the height of the throw or increasing the speed of the full turn, or both.
2. Repeating the sequence in front of a wall in order to correct the trajectory of the ball. **EX**





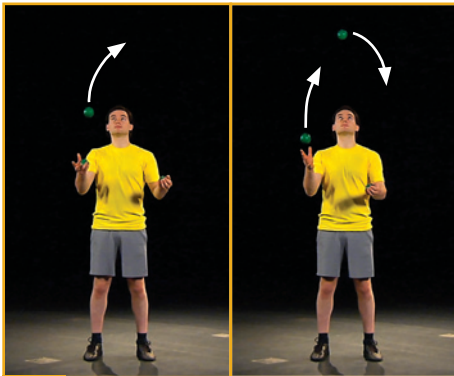
JUGGLING THREE-BALL SHOWER

Technical Element Description

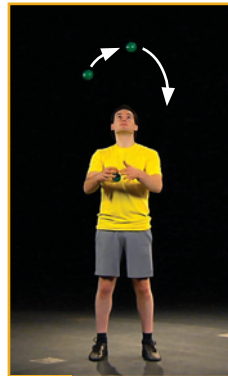
Three-ball pattern creating a continuous-circle movement.

Explanation of the Movement

- If the participant begins with the right hand, he should hold two balls in the right hand and one ball in the left hand.
- Throw the two balls from the right hand one at a time to the left hand in a circular trajectory. **M 1**
- Throw the ball from the left hand to the right hand in a horizontal trajectory as soon as the right hand is free. **M 2**
- Stabilize the transfer rhythm so as to allow a continuous action.



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. Hold a ball in each hand, throw the ball from the right hand to the left hand in a circular trajectory and, when it reaches the dead point, move the ball from the left hand to the right hand. **ED 1**
2. Repeat the preceding educational while throwing the ball from the left hand horizontally instead of simply moving it.





ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The throws into the air do not go far enough.
2. The height of the throws is not constant.
3. The transfer from the left hand to the right hand produces a small vertical throw, when it should be horizontal.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the force of the throws.
2. Determining a reference point slightly above the head. Holding two balls in the right hand, and then throwing both balls one at a time to the left hand in a circular trajectory while making sure the dead point for each ball corresponds to the reference point. **EX**
3. Practising the horizontal transfer from the left hand to the right hand. **EX**





JUGGLING

TWO BALLS IN ONE HAND

Technical Element Description

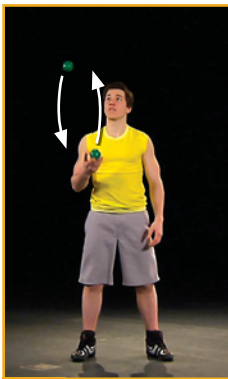
Pattern with two balls in one hand, with circular throws from the inside to the outside.

Prerequisite

- Throwing one ball from the inside to the outside in a circular trajectory and catching it with the same hand.

Explanation of the Movement

- Hold two balls in one hand, throw one of them into the air in a circular trajectory, from the inside to the outside, and then throw the second one when the first reaches the dead point. Catch the first ball, then continue the sequence while keeping one ball in the air. **M 1**

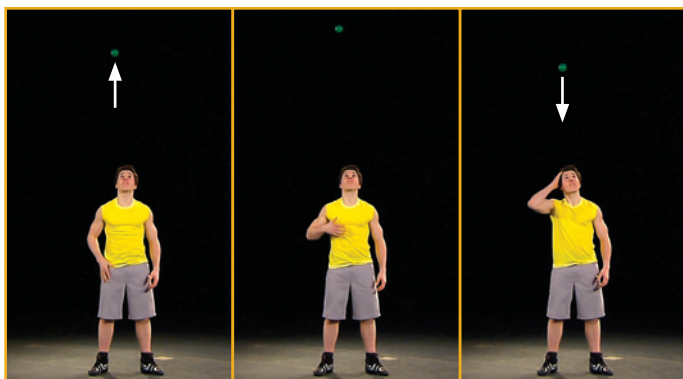


M 1

Educationals

1. With the right hand, throw one ball into the air, slap the thigh, then catch the ball with the same hand. Once this throw is mastered, increase the degree of difficulty by creating sequences and varying the number of slaps and the areas slapped. For example, the participant throws the ball, slaps his thigh, his cheek and his torso, then catches the ball. **ED 1**
2. Repeat the preceding educational with the left hand.





ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not have enough time to catch the balls and to guarantee a continuous movement because the balls are not thrown high enough.
2. The throws are made in a circle, but toward the body, from the outside to the inside.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. For each ball, determining a reference point situated at least 1 metre above the head and repeating the pattern while making sure the dead point of each of the balls corresponds to the reference point. **EX**
2. Making circular throws from the inside to the outside.

Variant

1. Repeat the technical element, but make circular throws from the outside to the inside. **V 1**



V 1





JUGGLING FOUR BALLS

Technical Element Description

Pattern with four balls, constantly keeping two balls in the air by means of circular throws from the inside to the outside.

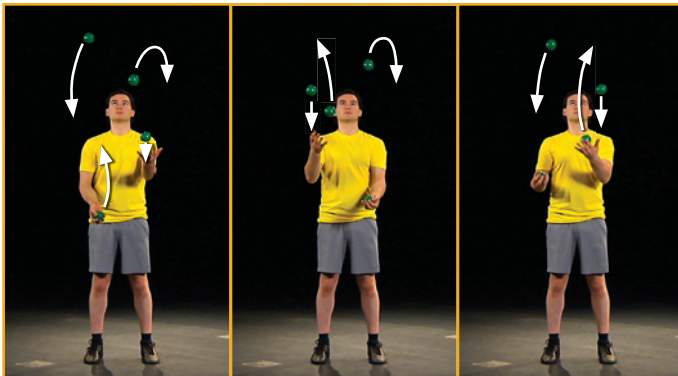
Prerequisite

- Two balls in one hand.

Explanation of the Movement

- Hold two balls in each hand. Then, starting with the right hand, throw the balls a little higher than the head in a circular trajectory from the inside to the outside. **M 1**
- Continue the throws by alternating the right and left sides, in a regular rhythm.

Notes: In this type of pattern, the balls do not cross, and each hand is independent, that is, there are no ball exchanges from one hand to the other.

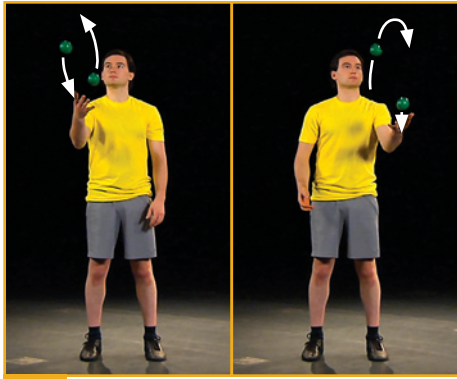


M 1

Educationals

1. Juggle two balls in one hand while alternating from the right hand to the left hand. **ED 1**
2. Make circular throws from the inside to the outside, add 1 to 2 metres of height, and return to the initial height.





ED 1

Common Mistakes

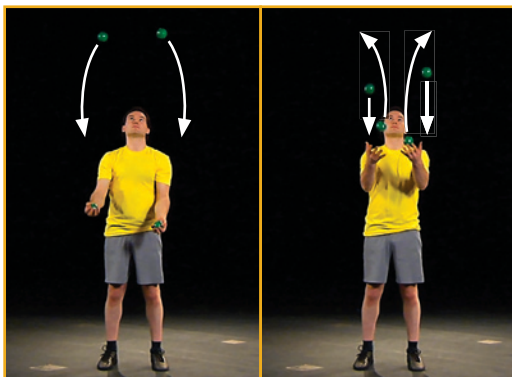
1. The throws are not to the same height.
2. The throws go too far to the inside and the balls cross.
3. The throws go too far to the outside.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Determining two reference points situated at the same height, slightly above the head, and repeating the pattern while making sure the dead point of each of the balls corresponds to its reference point. **EX**
2. The trajectory of the balls should be circular and the hands must complete the movement of the circle to the outside.
3. Making throws whose trajectories form smaller circles. This will make it easier to control the trajectory of the balls.

Variants

1. Juggle four balls in a column, that is, in synchronized hand movement. **V 1**
2. Throw two balls in inside columns and two balls in outside columns.



V 1





JUGGLING

STEALING THREE BALLS FROM IN FRONT

Technical Element Description

Three-ball pattern with two participants standing face to face.

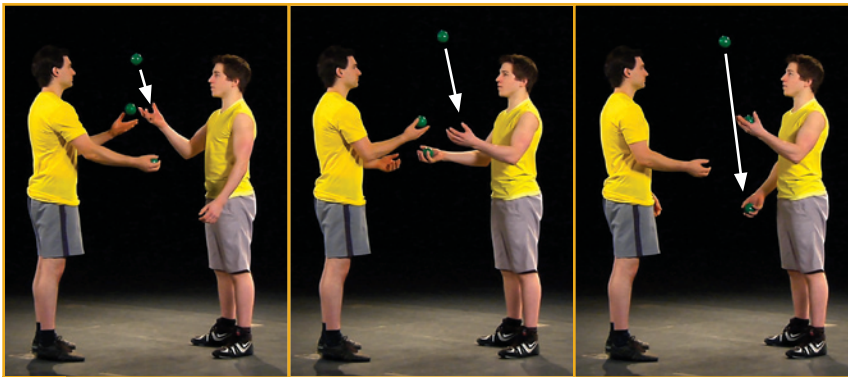
Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- One participant begins to juggle with three balls in cascade, while the other stands in front of him.
- The “thief” participant puts his arms out halfway to his partner, takes the balls one by one, from the right hand, then from the left hand, by placing his hands above his partner’s arms, then continues the three-ball cascade pattern. **M 1**

Note: It is important that the “thief” participant not cross his arms when he takes the balls.



M 1

Educational

1. From a three-ball cascade, the “thief” participant catches the first two balls and then both participants stop moving. Check the distance that separates them and make sure the hands are positioned at the right height when the balls are taken. After checking, the juggler participant transfers the third ball to his partner and the partner continues the three-ball cascade.



Common Mistakes

1. The “thief” participant crosses his hands.
2. The “thief” participant touches or disturbs the juggler’s hands.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the arms parallel.
2. Placing the hands higher than the arms of the juggler participant, and only “stealing” the balls when they reach the dead point in order to avoid disrupting the movements of the juggler.





JUGGLING

STEALING THREE BALLS FROM THE SIDE

Technical Element Description

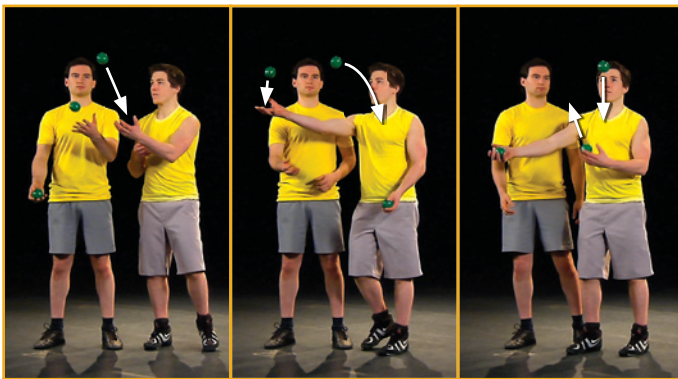
Three-ball pattern with two participants side by side.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- One participant begins to juggle three balls in cascade while the other stands next to him.
- The second participant puts his arms out halfway to the side toward his partner, catches the balls one by one, first with the hand furthest from his partner, then with the closer one, by placing his hands above his partner's arms. The right hand catches the balls thrown from the left hand, and vice versa.
- When the first and the second ball are caught, the participant who began the cascade should step back and throw the third ball under his partner's right arm. The partner will take his place and continue the three-ball cascade. **M 1**



M 1

Educational

1. From a three-ball cascade, the “thief” participant catches the first two balls, then both participants stop moving. Check the distance that separates them and make sure the hands are positioned at the right height when the balls are taken. After checking, the juggler participant transfers the third ball to his partner and the partner continues the three-ball cascade.



Common Mistakes

1. The “thief” does not take the right balls.
2. The “thief” participant, once the second ball is caught, does not take the place of his partner and juggles off-centre, with his hands to the side of his body.
3. The juggler participant does not step back after the two balls are stolen and does not give his partner enough space.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure the right hand catches the balls thrown from the left hand, and vice versa.
Asking the “thief” participant to observe his juggler partner, following the trajectory of the balls and visualizing the movements to execute when taking the balls. **EX**
2. Making sure the “thief” participant moves to the side and takes his partner’s place after he has caught the second ball.
3. Making sure, once the second ball is taken, the juggler participant moves back and leaves room for his partner.





JUGGLING SIX-BALL PASSING

Technical Element Description

Exchanging six balls between two participants standing face to face.

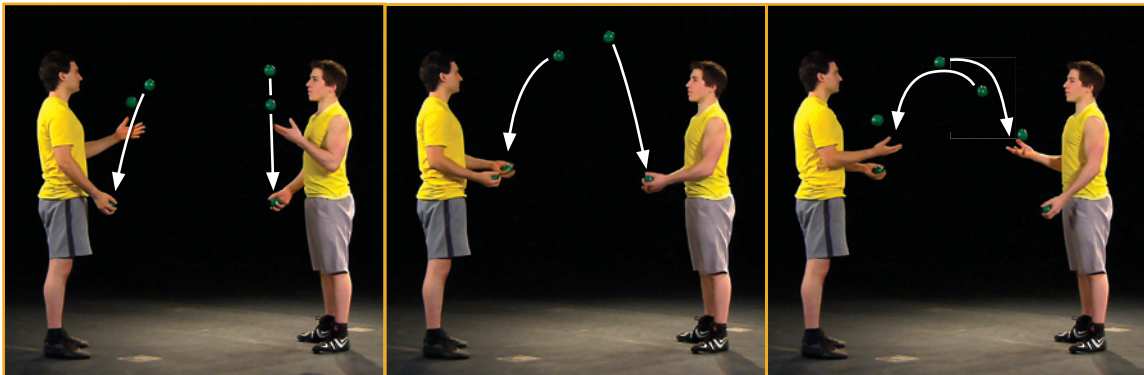
Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- Standing face to face, the participants begin to juggle in three-ball cascade at the same rhythm. At every second throw from the right hand, they throw a ball to their partner's left hand. The participants catch the ball with the left hand palm up and continue the three-ball cascade. This type of exchange is called "every two." **M 1**

Notes: There are different types of exchanges. For example, in the "every one" exchange, all the balls go from the right hand of one participant to the left hand of the partner. The participants can also do "every three," "every four," etc. The distance between them should be 1.5 to 2 metres.



M 1



Educationals

1. Two participants stand face to face. The first holds a ball in each hand, while the second does not have a ball.

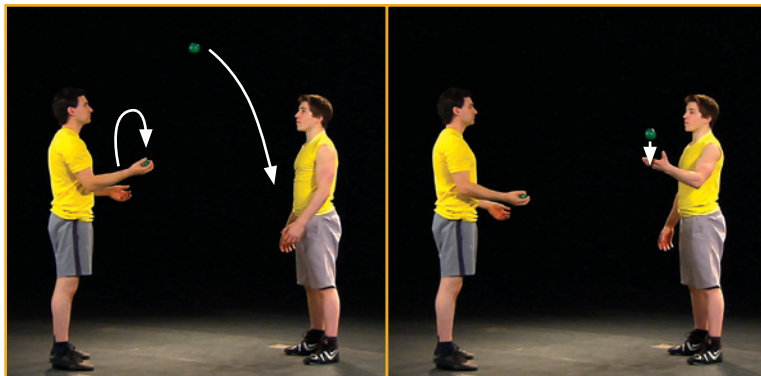
The first throws a ball from his left hand in cascade to his right hand, and then throws the ball from his right hand to the partner's left hand in an arc trajectory, a little higher than the head.

The second participant catches the ball and waits for the next throw from his partner. At the second throw, he transfers the ball from his left hand in cascade to his right hand and catches the incoming ball. **ED 1**

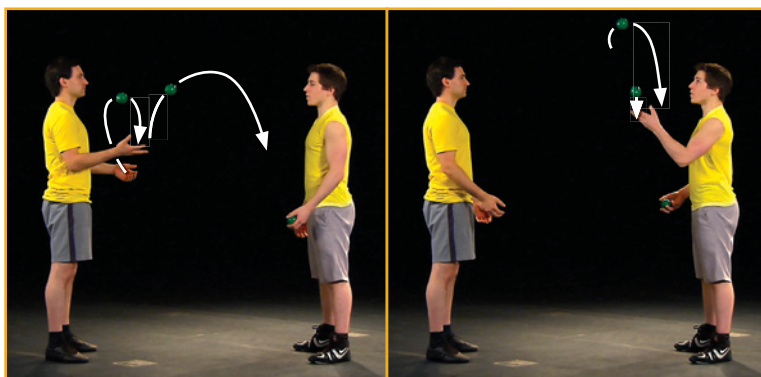
2. Two participants stand face to face. The first holds two balls in the right hand and one in the left hand, while the second participant does not have a ball.

The first participant begins to juggle in three-ball cascade. The second throw from his right hand is sent to his partner's left hand, while his left hand continues to make cascade throws.

In this way, the first participant transfers all the balls in a continuous rhythm. The second participant juggles in cascade with the balls received and begins the exercise again from the beginning. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2



Common Mistakes

1. Throws from the left hand are too far to the front.
2. There is a problem of synchronism or rhythm between the two participants.
3. The passes are thrown to the inside of the partner's body.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Reducing the force of throws from the left hand.
2. Always starting at the same time. Learning how to juggle in cascade to the same height and at the same rhythm in order to make exchanges easier.
3. Keeping the gaze on the partner's left shoulder and throwing in this direction.





JUGGLING

THREE BOUNCING BALLS: SLOW

Technical Element Description

Pattern with three balls bouncing off the floor at a slow rhythm.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball reverse cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- The passive three-ball bounce pattern, slow mode, is comparable to the three-ball reverse cascade, except that the half-circle movement of the throws is smaller and the balls fall to the ground.
- After bouncing, the balls are thrown over those directed to the floor, in a half-circle trajectory from the outside to the inside. **M 1**



M 1

Educationals

1. With a ball in the right hand and the feet shoulder-width apart, establish two points on the ground in front of the feet and near the centre of the body. Throw the ball to a height a little higher than the shoulders making half-circle movements from the outside to the inside. The ball should fall to the point on the floor closest to the left foot. After bouncing, catch the ball with the left hand.

Repeat the educational with the left hand by throwing the ball to the point on the floor that is closest to the right foot.

2. Hold a ball in each hand; throw one from the right hand to the inside and to the point on the ground closest to the left foot, then, when the ball bounces, throw one from the left hand to the inside and to the point on the ground closest to the right foot. Catch the first ball with the left hand and the second with the right hand.

Repeat the educational beginning with the left hand instead of the right hand.



Common Mistake

1. The throws go too far to the front or back.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Throwing the balls parallel to the body.
Juggling in front of a wall in order to learn to throw the balls parallel to the body. **EX**

Variant

1. Variation of the vertical position: Squat down and stand back up, by bending and straightening the knees, while still juggling to the floor in passive mode. Observe the change of rhythm with the variation in the height of the throws. **V 1**



V 1



JUGGLING

THREE BOUNCING BALLS: FAST

Technical Element Description

Pattern with three balls bouncing directly to the floor at a fast rhythm.

Prerequisite

- Two-ball bounces in passive mode.

Explanation of the Movement

- The three-ball bounce pattern in active, fast mode is comparable to the three-ball bounce pattern in passive mode, except that throws are made directly to the floor and the half-circle throws are made below the balls bouncing back. **M 1**



M 1

Educationals

1. With a ball in the right hand and the feet shoulder-width apart, establish two points on the ground in front of the feet and near the centre. Throw the ball directly to the floor and to the point on the floor closest to the right foot. After bouncing, catch the ball with the left hand.
Repeat the educational with the left hand by throwing the ball to the point on the floor that is closest to the right foot.
2. Hold a ball in each hand, throw the one from the right hand directly to the point on the floor that is closest to the right foot, then, when the ball comes back up from the floor, throw the second ball from the left hand directly to the point on the floor that is closest to the left foot below the incoming ball. Catch the first ball with the left hand and the second with the right hand.
Repeat the educational beginning with the left hand instead of the right hand.



Common Mistakes

1. The throws go too far to the front or back.
2. The force of the throws is not equal from one hand to the other.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Throwing the balls parallel to the body.
Juggling in front of a wall in order to learn to throw the balls parallel to the body. **EX**
2. Determining two reference points whose height corresponds to where the angle of the elbow is about 90° and repeat the movement, being careful that the maximum ball height corresponds to these reference points. **EX**

Variant

1. Variation of the vertical position: Squat down and stand back up by bending and straightening the knees, while still juggling to the floor in active mode. Observe the change of rhythm with the variation in the height of the throws.





JUGGLING THREE-CLUB CASCADE

Technical Element Description

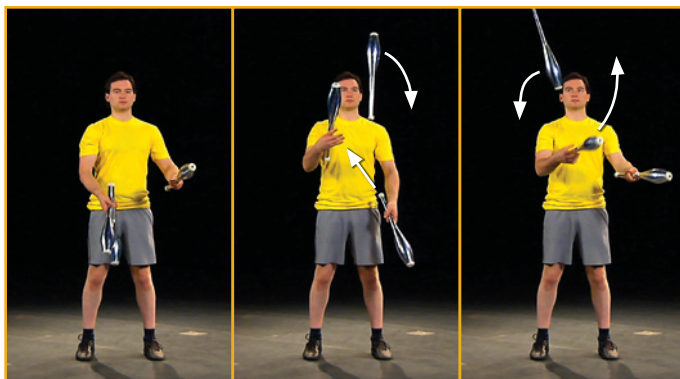
Pattern with three clubs with criss-crossing throws.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- Standing, take two clubs in the right hand and another in the left hand with the arms shoulder-width apart and the elbows bent at an angle of approximately 90°.
- Throw a club from the right hand to the left hand in a parabolic trajectory while creating a rotation with the wrist and elbow. When the club reaches its dead point, throw the club from the left hand so that it is free to catch the first club. With the hand palm up, hold the club by the handle and absorb the catch. When the second club reaches its dead point, throw the third club from the right hand, and so on. **M 1**
- While throwing, the forearm movements should make a circle in a continuous movement and constant rhythm.



M 1

Educationals

1. Throw a club from one hand to the other in a parabolic trajectory, a little higher than the head, using only the forearms.

It is important to absorb the force of the club when catching it to make the movement fluid. Avoid giving a rapid spin to the club, and catch it by the handle.

Repeat the exercise while changing hands. **ED 1**

2. Take a club in each hand, throw the one from the right hand to the left and, when it reaches its dead point, throw the club from the left hand. In order to keep a regular rhythm, the participant may count while throwing the clubs. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

Common Mistakes

1. The throws go too far to the front.
2. The rotation speed of the second or third throw is too fast, and the throw is too low.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Throwing the clubs parallel to the body.
Juggling in front of a wall in order to learn to throw the clubs parallel to the body. **EX**
2. Determining two points of reference situated at the same height, slightly above the head. Holding a club in each hand and then throwing the clubs in a parabolic trajectory. Making sure they have the same rotation from the second throw, and also making sure the dead point of each of the clubs corresponds to its reference point. **EX**

Variant

1. Three-club cascade with double and triple rotation, with high throws, to about 1.5 to 2 metres above the head. **V 1**



V 1



JUGGLING

STEALING THREE CLUBS FROM THE SIDE

Technical Element Description

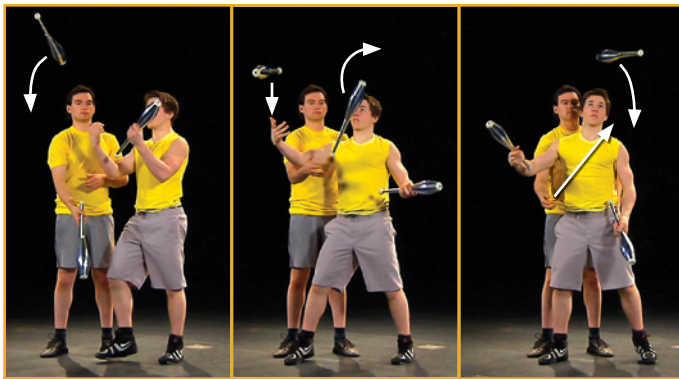
Three-club pattern with two participants side by side.

Prerequisite

- Three-club cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- One participant begins to juggle three clubs in cascade while the other stands next to him.
- The second participant puts his arms out halfway to the side toward his partner, catches the clubs one by one, first with the hand furthest from his partner, then with the closer one, by placing his hands above his partner's arms. The right hand catches the clubs thrown from the left hand, and vice versa.
- When the first and the second club are caught, the participant who began the cascade should step back and throw the third club under his partner's right arm. The partner will take his place and continue the three-club cascade. **M 1**



M 1

Educationals

1. Take away just one club with the hand furthest from the juggler participant and stop. Check to see that the participant has caught the right club; the right hand catches the clubs thrown from the left hand, and vice versa. Repeat the educational while catching the club from the left hand. **ED 1**
2. From a three-club cascade, the "thief" participant catches the first two clubs, and then both participants stop moving. Check the distance that separates them and make sure the hands are positioned at the right height when the clubs are taken. After checking, the juggler participant transfers the third club to his partner, and the partner continues the three-club cascade. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

Common Mistakes

1. The “thief” participant does not take the right clubs.
2. The “thief” participant does not take his partner’s place and juggles “off-centre,” his hands to the side of his body.
3. The juggler participant does not step back after the two clubs are taken, and does not give his partner enough space.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure the right hand catches the clubs thrown from the left hand, and vice versa.
Asking the “thief” participant to observe his juggler partner, following the trajectory of the clubs and visualizing the movements to execute when taking the clubs. **EX**
2. Making sure the “thief” participant moves to the side and takes his partner’s place after he has caught the second club.
3. Making sure, once the second club is taken, the juggler participant moves back and leaves room for his partner.



JUGGLING SIX CLUBS PASSING

Technical Element Description

Exchanging of six clubs between two participants standing face to face.

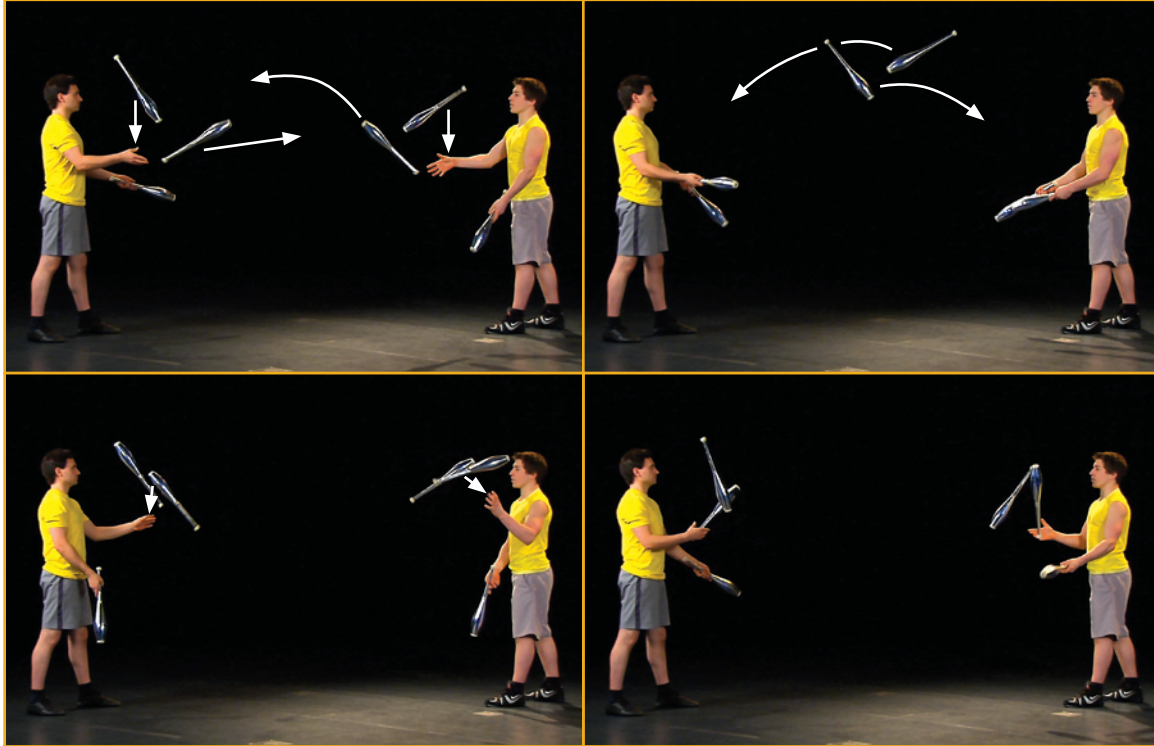
Prerequisite

- Three-club cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- Standing face to face, the participants begin to juggle in cascade with three clubs at the same time and the same rhythm. At every second throw from the right hand, they throw a club to their partner's left hand. The participants catch the club with the left hand palm up and continue the three-club cascade. This type of exchange is called "every two." **M 1**

Notes: There are different types of exchanges. For example, in the "every one" exchange, all the clubs go from the right hand of one participant to the left hand of the partner. The participants can also do "every three," "every four," etc. The distance between them should be about 1.5 to 2 metres.



M 1



Educationals

1. Two participants stand face to face. The first holds a club in each hand, while the second does not have a club.

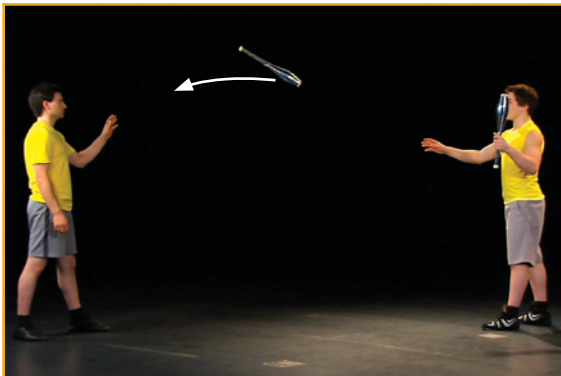
The first throws a club from the left hand in cascade to his right hand, and then throws the club from his right hand to his partner's left hand in a direct trajectory.

The second participant catches the club and waits for the next throw from his partner. At the second throw, he transfers the club from his left hand in cascade to his right hand and catches the incoming club. **ED 1**

2. Two participants stand face to face. The first holds two clubs in the right hand and one in the left hand, while the second participant does not have a club.

In this way, the first participant transfers all the clubs in a continuous rhythm. The second participant juggles in cascade with the clubs received and begins the exercise again from the beginning. Repeat the exercise without interrupting the exchanges. **ED 2**

3. Starting the same way as in the previous educational, the first participant transfers the three clubs to his partner. However, instead of continuing to juggle in cascade after receiving the clubs, the second participant makes only one throw in cascade from his left hand, then throws a club from his right hand to his partner while continuing the exchanges without interruption.



ED 1



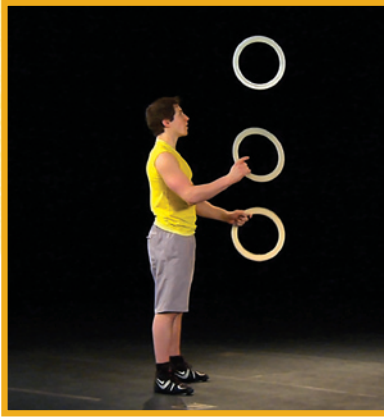
ED 2

Common Mistakes

1. The left hand throws too far to the front.
2. The two partners are not synchronized; the rhythm is problematic.
3. The passes are thrown toward the partner's torso.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Reducing the force of throws from the left hand.
2. Always starting at the same time. Learning how to juggle in cascade to the same height and at the same rhythm as the partner's.
3. Keeping the gaze on the partner's left shoulder and throwing in this direction.



JUGGLING THREE-RING CASCADE

Technical Element Description

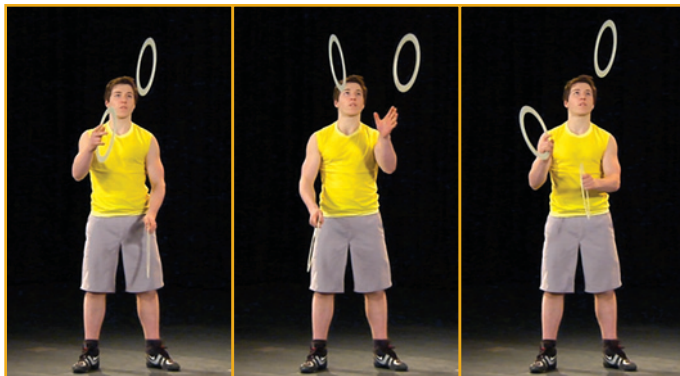
Pattern with three rings with criss-crossing throws.

Prerequisite

- Three-ball cascade.

Explanation of the Movement

- Standing, take two rings in the right hand and one ring in the left hand, keeping the arms shoulder-width apart and the elbows bent to an angle of approximately 45°.
- Throw a ring from the right hand to the left hand in a parabolic trajectory while creating a rotation with the wrist and elbow. When the ring reaches its dead point, throw the one from the left hand so that it is free to catch the first ring. With the hand open in front, grab the ring in the hollow of the hand and close the hand quickly to absorb the catch. When the second ring reaches its dead point, throw the third ring from the right hand, and so on. **M 1**
- While throwing, the forearm movements should make a circle in a continuous movement and constant rhythm.



M 1



Educationals

1. Throw a ring from one hand to the other in a parabolic trajectory, a little higher than the head, using only the forearms and adding the rotation with the wrists. It is important to properly absorb the force of the ring when catching it in order to ensure fluidity of movement. **ED 1**
2. Make high throws and clap the hands each time the ring is in the air, being careful to absorb the force of the ring when catching it. Once these throws are mastered, the degree of difficulty can be raised by increasing the number of claps or making them in front and behind the body.
3. Take a ring in each hand, throw the first ring to the other hand in a parabolic trajectory and, when it reaches its dead point, throw the other ring. In order to keep a regular rhythm, the participant may count while throwing the rings.
4. Take a ring in each hand, and throw both rings at the same time and to the same height, a little higher than the head, without crossing them. Throw alternately from the right hand and the left hand while slapping the thigh after each throw.



ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The throws go too far to the front or back.
2. The throws are not to the same height.
3. The rings are caught too abruptly, too tightly. The participant's movements lack lightness and fluidity.
4. The rings wobble in the air.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Throwing the rings parallel to the body.
Juggling in front of a wall in order to learn to throw the rings parallel to the body. **EX**
2. Determining two points of reference situated at the same height, slightly above the head. Holding a ring in each hand and then throwing the rings at the same time, making sure the dead point of each ring corresponds to the reference points. **EX**
3. Reminding the participant to adjust the catching according to the weight of the object.
Holding a ring in each hand and making high throws, emphasizing smoothness and lightness of movement. **EX**
4. Increasing the rotation speed of the rings using the wrists.



JUGGLING THREE-RING FLASH

Technical Element Description

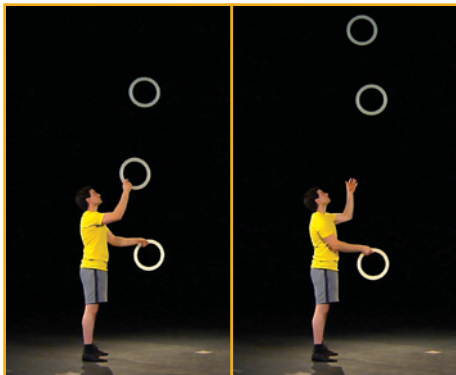
During a three-ring cascade, throwing all the rings high, catching them and continuing the original pattern.

Prerequisites

- Three-ring cascade.
- Three-ring cascade with high throws.

Explanation of the Movement

- The participant determines a reference point, or “X,” about 1 metre above his head.
- Starting from a three-ring cascade, throw all the rings into the air one by one in a parabolic trajectory to about 2 metres above the head. When the three rings are in the air, it is called a “flash.” The cadence of the throws must be adjusted so that the rings cross at the height of the reference point, or X, during the flash. Catch the rings one by one, then return to the cascade. **M 1**
- The height of the flash can vary.



M 1

Educationals

1. Juggle in a three-ring cascade by making the throws to about 2 metres above the head at a slower rhythm and with bigger movements than in a flowing cascade. During the cascade, the participant sets the X at about 1 metre above his head and continues the cascade while being careful to keep the gaze on the X without doing the flash.
2. From a three-ring cascade, throw two rings up about 2 metres at a rapid rhythm and return to the cascade. Repeat the exercise while alternating from the left hand to the right hand for the first throw. Try to increase the speed of the throws.



Common Mistakes

1. The second throw of the flash is too low.
2. The throws go too far to the front or back.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Determining a reference point about 2 metres above the participant's head. From a three-ring cascade, throw two rings into the air, making sure the dead point of each of the rings corresponds to its reference point while keeping a rapid throwing rhythm.
2. Throwing the rings parallel to the body. Juggling in front of a wall in order to learn to throw the rings parallel to the body. **EX**



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

In collaboration with



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