

BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



STILTS



FONDATION
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

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NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

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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.



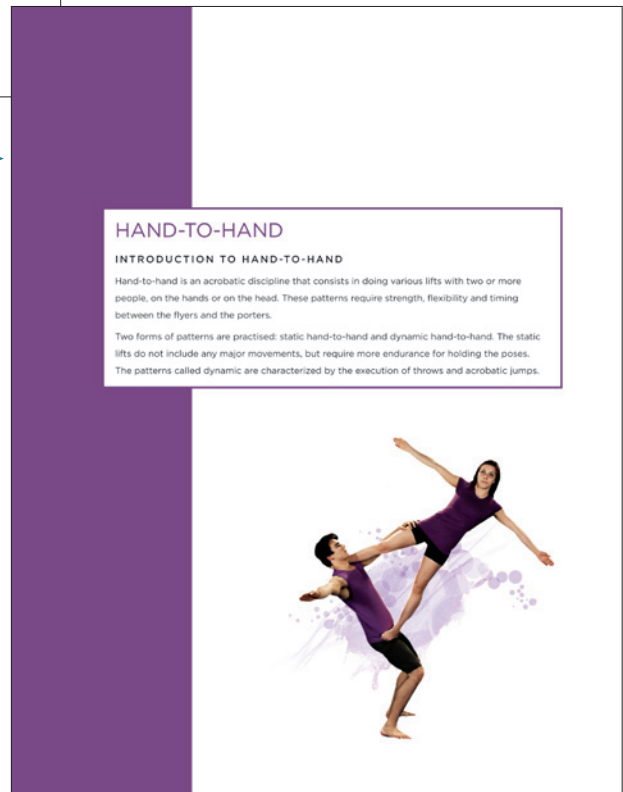
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



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

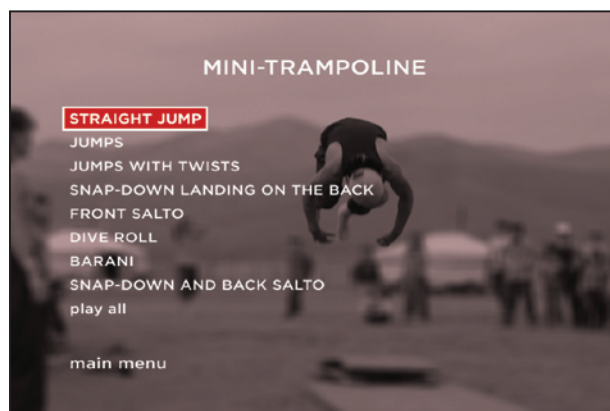


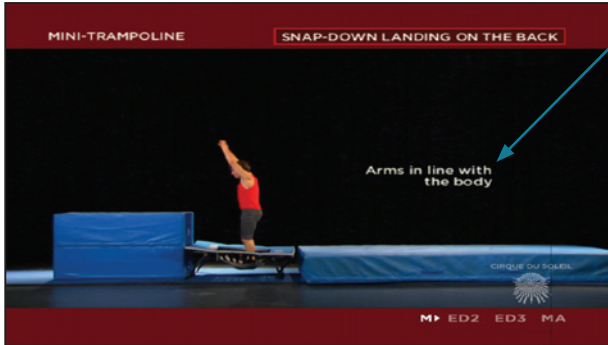
Main Menu

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.



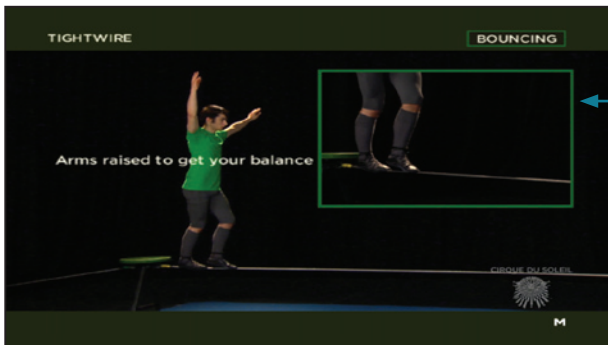


Warnings

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.



STILTS

INTRODUCTION TO STILTS

Stilts are devices that allow the user to move above the ground. Provided with a foot stirrup, they are often made of wood or very light metal.

Inspired by the long legs of wading birds living in swamps, these devices are used throughout the world for various purposes: a children's game, harvesting fruit, religious ceremonies and tools for working at heights.

This discipline is very popular in the circus and in street theatre, and it allows playing giant characters, taking large steps and juggling.



TERMINOLOGY

Base of support

An object's or a body's contact surface with the ground.

Battements

Action of raising one leg straight to the front with the foot pointing and making an angle of approximately 90° or more with the body.

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.

Foot stirrup

Mechanism that attaches the foot to the stilt.

Landing mat

Mat used to cushion a participant's fall. It should be at least 15 centimetres thick for falling from small stilts and at least 20 centimetres thick for higher stilts.

Spotter

Individual who manually assists the execution of a movement or a position.

Standing in place

Standing balanced without moving forward or backwards.

Strap

Strap made of cloth or leather and used as a fastener.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

First contact

To get to know the feeling of being on stilts, try to stay balanced on just the heels, without letting the pelvis go too far to the rear. Move forward and backwards walking on the heels. Reproduce this exercise with short stilts.

Height of the stilts

Short stilts approximately 30 centimetres high are recommended for beginners. Long stilts should be approximately 45 centimetres high.

Shoes

Ideally, attach a pair of shoes to the stilts. Take care to position them perfectly. Any wrong foot position will be amplified by the stilts. Compensate for possible faults by attaching the shoe to the platform of the stilt with small washers. Attaching shoes is not recommended if there are several users of different sizes.

Control falls

After ambulation is mastered, practise falling deliberately on a landing mat to learn to manage losses of balance and to better control falls from greater heights.

SAFETY

To learn with stilts higher than 1 metre, work with a safety belt and a lunge.

Periodically check the condition of the straps. They must be replaced at the first sign of breakage.

Smooth or wet surfaces entail a risk of slipping. Check the condition of the work surface before putting on the stilts.

Falls to the front may cause wrist fractures. Wearing wrist guards is recommended while learning.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

STILTS

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Standing position	5
Forward walk	6
Controlled knee drop	8
Getting to standing position with help	11
Backwards walk	13
Grapevine	15
Battements	17
Half turn on one stilt	19
Jump	21
Juggling on stilts	23





STILTS

STANDING POSITION

Technical Element Description

Maintaining a standing position on small stilts.

Prerequisite

- Without stilts, maintaining balance on the heels while moving on the ground.

Explanation of the Movement

- Keeping the COM over the base of support, maintain an upright posture. Since the base of support is very small, it is necessary to constantly move the stilts.

Manual Aid

- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter's fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant puts too much weight on the spotter's arms.
2. The participant leans forward and looks at the ground.
3. The arm movements to maintain balance are excessive.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Transferring the weight onto the legs.
2. Gazing at a point on the horizon.
3. Moving the stilts rather than the upper body.

Variant

1. With longer stilts.





STILTS FORWARD WALK

Technical Element Description

Moving forward on small stilts.

Prerequisite

- Standing position. Standing in place for 30 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, in place, transfer the COM forward, move one stilt to the front and stabilize the balance, and then move the other stilt to the front, and so on.

Educationals

1. Standing on one's heels, move forward by transferring the COM first.
2. On small stilts, repeat the same exercise with a spotter, face to face.
3. Repeat the same exercise with lateral aid from a spotter, without touching each other.

Manual Aid

- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter's fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet. **MA 1**
- Aid without contact: The spotter stands beside the participant with the arms outstretched, so as to keep him in a "fork." If the participant falls, the spotter catches him and helps him regain balance. **MA 2**



MA 1



MA 2



Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble moving forward.
2. The participant moves forward too quickly.
3. The participant stumbles while moving.
4. The participant relies too much on the spotter.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Transferring the COM more forward before moving a stilt.
2. Reducing the COM forward transfer.
3. Lifting the stilts higher.
4. Keeping the weight on the legs.

Variant

1. With longer stilts.





STILTS

CONTROLLED KNEE DROP

Technical Element Description

Deliberately falling, with the knees hitting the ground first, followed by the hands.

Prerequisite

- Forward walk.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, move the COM forward, like in the forward walk, to create an imbalance. **M 1**
- Bend the knees to lower the COM as close as possible to the ground, put the knees on the mat and finish the fall by putting the hands down. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. Without stilts, on the landing mat, from the standing position, gently put the knees down while keeping the shoulders back in order to keep the COM above the feet for as long as possible. **ED 1**
2. Repeat the same exercise with small stilts in front of the landing mat.
3. This time, work with a thinner mat (2-3 cm) and use wrist guards.
4. Repeat the exercise without the floor mat, with manual aid without contact and use wrist guards.





ED 1

Manual Aid

- Aid without contact: The spotter stands beside the participant with the arms outstretched so as to keep him in a “fork.”
- When the participant lets himself fall, the spotter catches him by the waist and slows his fall on the knees while letting him fall all the way. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

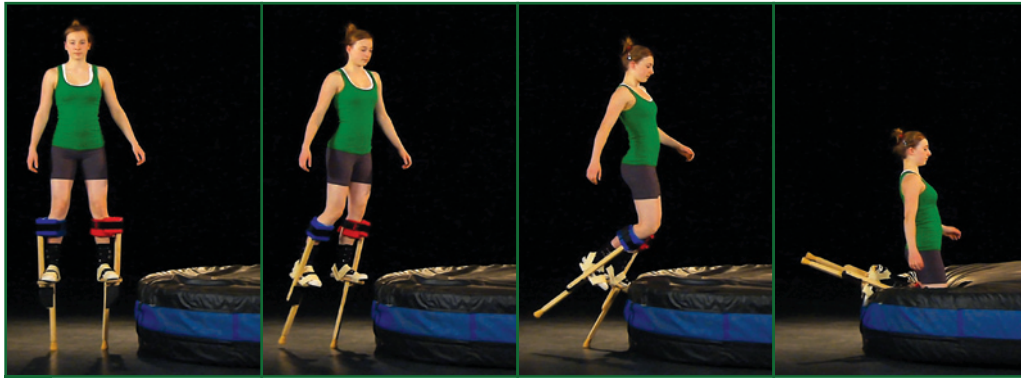
1. The participant falls straight, his hands hitting the ground first.
2. The participant falls backwards.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Moving the knees forward before falling.
2. Avoiding pushing the shoulders too far back; moving the knees forward.

Variants

1. Sideways fall: Cushion the movement by making a quarter turn and falling on both knees. **V 1**



V 1





STILTS

GETTING TO STANDING POSITION WITH HELP

Technical Element Description

From the seated position, getting to the standing position on small stilts with manual aid.

Prerequisite

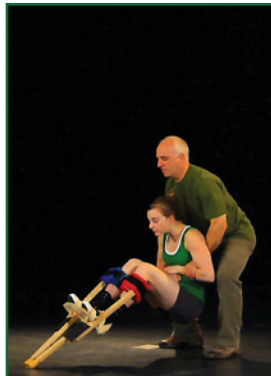
- Standing position.

Explanation of the Movement

- With small stilts, start in the seated position on the ground, legs bent and slightly apart, arms flexed, and hands at chest height. **M 1**
- The spotter squats behind the participant and he assists him by placing his hands under the participant's arms. **M 2**
- The spotter lifts the participant to the standing position and maintains contact so that the participant is stable. **M 3**
- When the participant is stable, the spotter takes the lateral position for manual aid without contact.



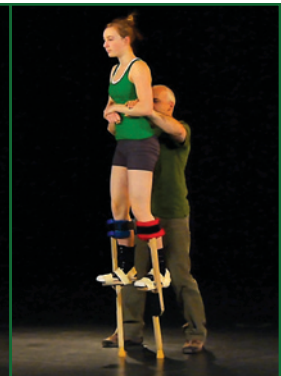
M 1



M 2

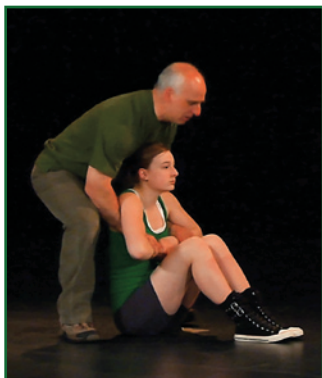


M 3



Educational

1. Practise getting up with help without stilts. **ED 1**



ED 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble standing up because the spotter is too far away.
2. The participant has trouble standing up because the spotter is too small or not strong enough.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The spotter should move closer and put the participant in a stable standing position.
2. Changing spotters, if possible.





STILTS BACKWARDS WALK

Technical Element Description

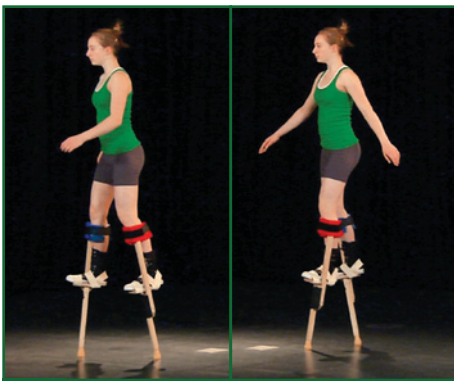
Moving backwards in a vertical position on small stilts.

Prerequisites

- Standing position, in place, for 30 seconds.
- Forward walk.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, in place, move the COM backwards. Then move one stilt to regain balance and continue.



M 1

Educationals

1. From the standing position on the heels, with manual aid, walk backwards by moving the COM first.
2. On small stilts, with the help of a spotter, repeat the same exercise.

Manual Aid

- Aid without contact: The spotter stands beside the participant with the arms outstretched so as to keep him in a “fork.” If the participant falls, the spotter catches him and helps him regain balance. **MA 1**
- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter’s fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet.





MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble moving backwards.
2. The backwards movement is done too quickly.
3. The participant stumbles or falls while moving.
4. The participant relies too much on the spotter.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Transferring the COM backwards before moving the stilt.
2. Controlling the COM backwards transfer.
3. Lifting the stilts higher.
4. Keeping the weight on the legs.

Variant

1. With longer stilts.





STILTS GRAPEVINE

Technical Element Description

Lateral movement by cross-stepping to the front and back.

Prerequisites

- Forward walk.
- Backwards walk.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, in place, move the COM laterally to the left. **M 1**
- Move the right stilt by crossing the leg over the left leg. **M 2**
- Move the left stilt in order to return to the standing position. **M 3**
- Repeat the movement by crossing the right leg behind the left leg.
- Repeat the whole movement to the right.



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educationals

1. From the standing position on the heels, move laterally to the left and to the right by crossing the legs.
2. Repeat the same exercises with small stilts and manual face-to-face aid.
3. With lateral aid without contact.

Manual Aid

- Aid without contact: The spotter stands behind the participant with the arms outstretched, so as to keep him in a “fork.” If the participant falls, the spotter catches him and helps him regain balance. **MA 1**
- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter’s fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet.



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble moving.
2. The participant moves too quickly.
3. The participant stumbles or falls while moving.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the COM lateral movement before moving the stilt.
2. Controlling the COM transfer.
3. Lifting the stilts higher. Making a wider movement to avoid knocking the stilts together.





STILTS BATTEMENTS

Technical Element Description

Maintaining the standing position with one leg raised very high to the front or back.

Prerequisites

- Standing position.
- Forward walk.
- Backwards walk.

Explanation of the Movement

- While moving the COM over one stilt, lift the other leg very high to the front. **M 1**
- Repeat the COM transfer while lifting the other leg to the rear.



M 1

Educationals

1. From the standing position on the heels, practise the exercise without stilts. **ED 1**
2. On small stilts, with face-to-face manual aid, move the COM over one of the stilts and slightly lift the other stilt, bending the leg, for a period of 2 to 3 seconds. **ED 2**
3. Same exercise, lifting and bending the leg higher and higher to the front, with face-to-face manual aid. **ED 3**





ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

Manual Aid

- The spotter stands beside the participant and extends one arm in order to allow the participant to rest on his hand to maintain balance. **MA 1**
- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter's fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet.



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not have enough time to lift the other leg.
2. The participant falls forward or backwards.
3. The participant has difficulty raising the leg.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Positioning the COM over the stilt on the ground.
2. Keeping the COM over the stilt on the ground.
3. Performing leg flexibility and strength exercises. **EX**

Variant

1. Various patterns from the standing position on one leg.





STILTS

HALF TURN ON ONE STILT

Technical Element Description

From the forward walk, executing a half turn.

Prerequisites

- Forward walk.
- Backwards walk.
- Battements.

Explanation of the Movement

To the left

- Walking forward, position the left stilt a little farther from the COM so as to slow down and give a slight backwards lean. **M 1**
- With the right leg, push into the ground while bringing the hip forward so as to pivot around the left stilt. **M 2**
- After pushing with the right leg, lift the right stilt by bending the knee. **M 3**



M 1



M 2

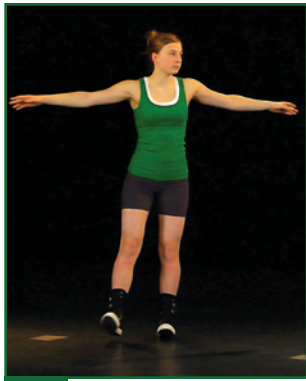


M 3

Educationals

1. Perform the exercise without stilts, walking on the heels. **ED 1**
2. From walking forward on small stilts, with face-to-face manual aid, transfer the weight onto one stilt in order to increase the time resting on each stilt. Next, do the same exercise while making very small rotations to both sides. **ED 2**
3. Take a few steps forward; make a small rotation by changing direction slightly to the right. **ED 3**
4. Increase the rotation until making a half turn to the right.





ED 1



ED 2



ED 3

Manual Aid

- Aid without contact. The spotter must be inside the semicircle. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble making the half turn successfully.
2. The participant has trouble changing direction.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the push with the outside leg. Completely transferring the weight onto the inside foot.
2. Stopping the momentum completely and leaning back slightly.

Variant

1. Half turn to the right.





STILTS JUMP

Technical Element Description

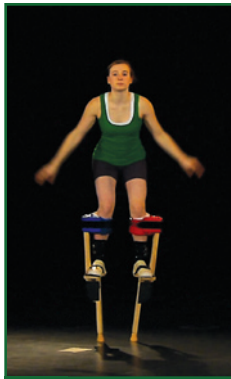
From the standing position, jumping forward.

Prerequisites

- Standing position.
- Forward walk.
- Backwards walk.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, place both stilts parallel and temporarily stay balanced. Bend the knees and simultaneously push off upwards with both legs. **M 1**
- The action of the arms should be synchronized with that of the legs. The arms should be low when bending the knees and then come up while the legs are pushing. **M 2**
- Absorb the landing by bending the knees. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educationals

1. From the standing position without stilts, execute the movement on the heels.
2. From the standing position on small stilts, find the balance point with both stilts on the ground for 3 seconds.
3. With face-to-face manual aid, find the balance point and do a small vertical jump.
4. Repeat this exercise with lateral manual aid.



Manual Aid

- Lateral aid without contact. **MA 1**
- Face to face, the spotter locks his arms so that the participant can support himself on the spotter's fists. The spotter must not hinder the movement of the stilts with his feet.



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not have enough time to prepare the jump.
2. The jump goes too far forward, which makes landing difficult.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Practising balance with both stilts on the ground. **EX**
2. Reducing the inclination of the torso while preparing for the jump.





STILTS

JUGGLING ON STILTS

Technical Element Description

Executing juggling patterns standing in place.

Prerequisites

- Forward walk.
- Backwards walk.
- Standing position for 30 seconds.
- Juggling patterns without stilts.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing position, execute juggling patterns with balls, scarves, clubs, etc.

Safety Notice: The spotter must make sure to pick up any juggling props that fall to the ground to prevent the stilt walker from tripping.

Educationals

1. Standing on small stilts, in place:

- While staring at the horizon; **ED 1.a**
- With the hands behind the back; **ED 1.b**
- While looking toward a moving object thrown by a partner. **ED 1.c**

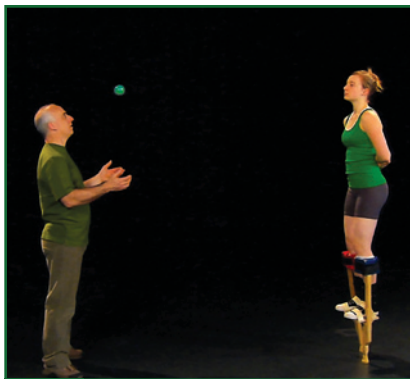
2. Standing on small stilts, execute juggling educationals with lateral manual aid.



ED 1.a



ED 1.b



ED 1.c

Manual Aid

- Lateral aid without contact. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble juggling.
2. The juggling movements are imprecise.
3. The participant moves around too much.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Mastering juggling without stilts. **EX**
2. Maintaining balance without using the arms. **EX**
3. Increasing the precision of the throws. **EX**

Variant

1. Forward walk with juggling prop exchange.



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



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