

BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



TIGHTWIRE



FONDATION
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

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NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

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Legal deposit: Summer 2011

* 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.



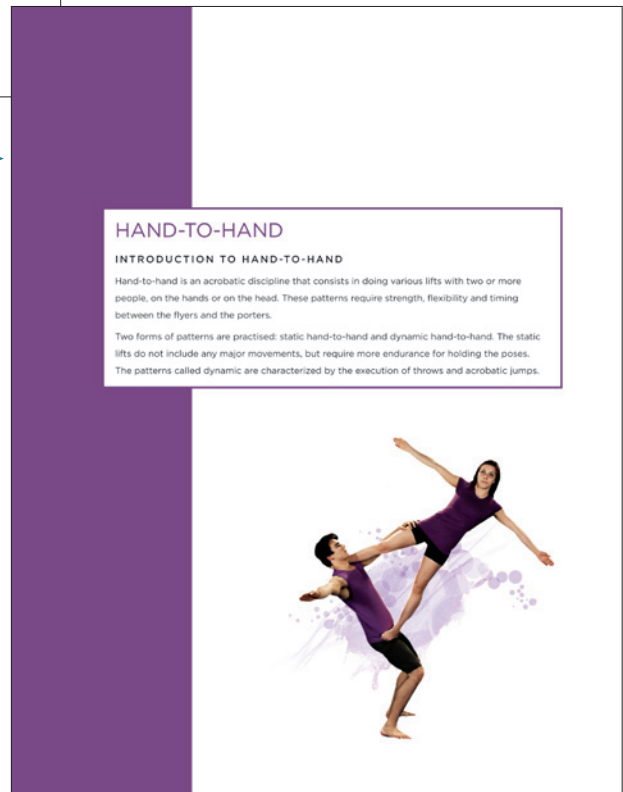
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



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.


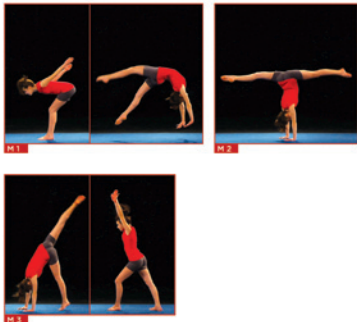
Prerequisites

- 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

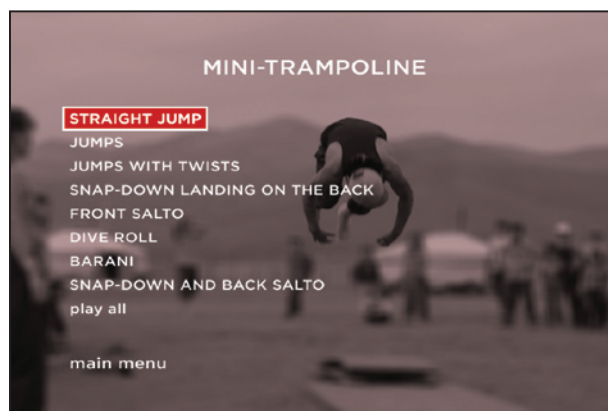


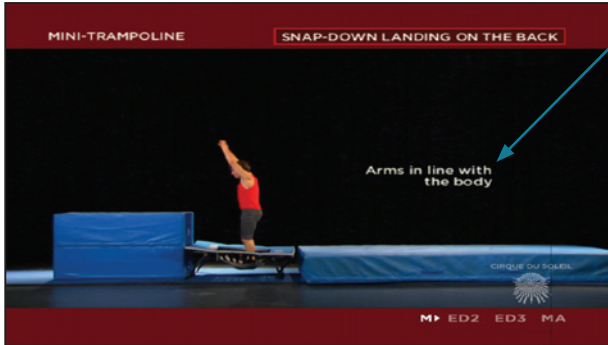
Main Menu

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.



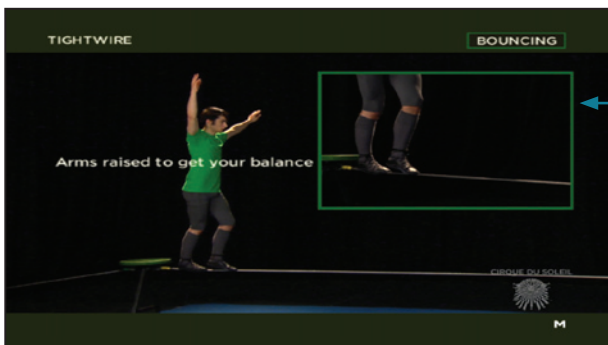


Warnings

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.





TIGHTWIRE

INTRODUCTION TO THE TIGHTWIRE

Tightwire practice consists in balancing and executing a series of patterns on a metal cable stretched horizontally. The presence of springs at the end of the wire provides a degree of elasticity called “tempo,” which is useful for dance steps and jumps.

The tightwire walker, unlike the funambulist, generally practises at a low height, about 2 metres from the ground. This circus art requires concentration, coordination and body awareness.

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

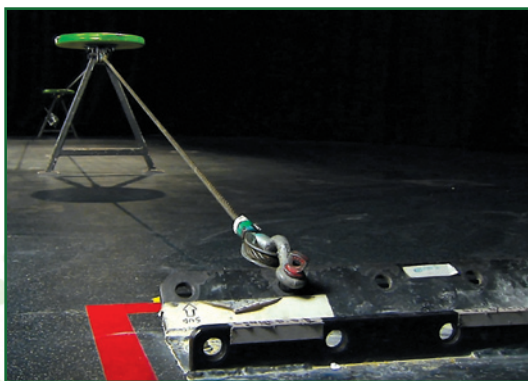
Action of flexing a leg, bringing the foot up and placing it on the knee of the opposite leg.

Wire

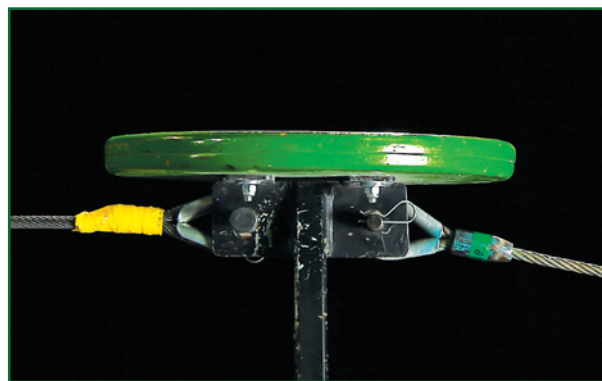
Cable on which one walks.

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.

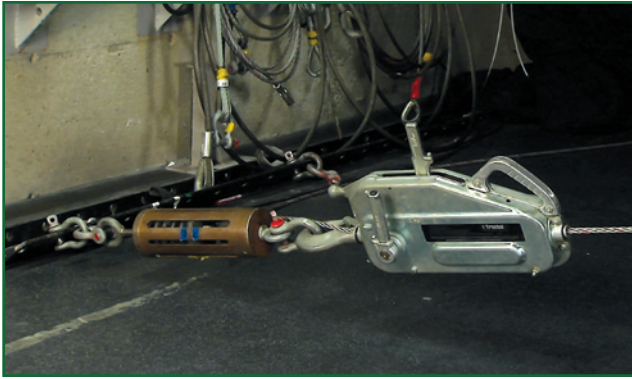


Side cables



A-frame





Hand-operated winch

Note: *There are self-supporting wires that are often shorter and not as tight, but that do not require anchoring points; they are quicker to set up, but they require more space.*

SAFETY

Before tightening the wire, always completely double-check the installation: the position of the shackles, the cables and the A-frames.

Learning can take place on a small tightwire at about 60 cm from the ground, allowing the participant to jump, fall and get back on the wire without getting injured. Lunges or safety devices are not necessary. However, a mat under the tightwire is imperative.

During practice, do not leave any objects under the wire, because the participant may hurt himself. Maintain conditions for concentration in order to practise the discipline safely.

Avoid having the participant hold a baton in his hands, since this can hurt him if he falls or hurt someone else if he raises it.

Pants or long tights are recommended to avoid scraping the legs in case of a fall, as well as dance shoes with a thin leather sole of uniform thickness. If the participant does not have the right shoes, he should work in socks.



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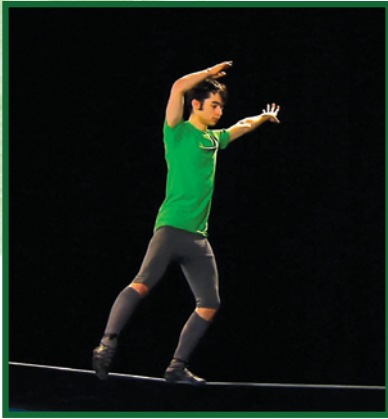
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TIGHTWIRE BASIC POSITION



Technical Element Description

With one foot closed, maintaining balance standing on the wire.

Explanation of the Movement

- Start position on the floor at the centre of the wire.
- Put one foot in closed position on the wire. In the basic position, the foot is always straight, flat and aligned on the wire. The wire should go between the big toe and the second toe and the centre of the heel.
- Look at the end of the wire. Focus on the point where the wire is attached to the A-frame. Do not look at the ground or past the A-frame.
- Raise the arms, mount the wire and stay standing straight. Avoid leaning to the front or back or moving the hips too much. The COM must always be in the middle of the support foot.
- Keep the knee of the support leg slightly flexed. Try to balance with the knee of the support leg, the arms and the free leg.
- Maintain balance for 5, 10 or 20 seconds, dismount and repeat the exercise with the other foot.

Note: On the tightwire, the participant should feel that the legs are heavy, solid and grounded and that his arms are light, lifted and energized. This concept may be difficult to grasp at the beginning due to its contradictory nature.

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line. **ED 1**
2. Maintain balance with manual aid. **ED 2**
3. Maintain balance and let go of the instructor's hand for as long as possible.



ED 1



ED 2



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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The wire shakes.
3. The participant relies too much on the instructor.

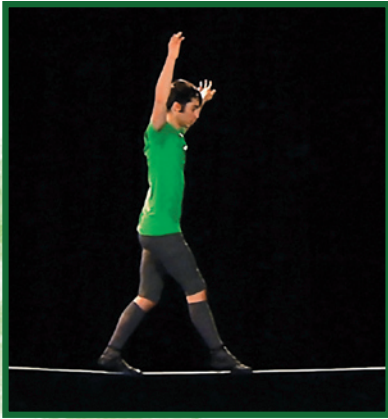
Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Trying to balance with the arms, the support knee and the other leg.
2. The participant must try regaining his composure. Flexing the knee of the support leg.
3. The instructor must move the participant so that his COM remains above the support leg.

Variants

1. Two by two on the wire. Back to back, each facing an A-frame.
2. Contest: Holding the position as long as possible.





TIGHTWIRE FORWARD WALK

Technical Element Description

From the basic position, sliding one foot forward along the wire.

Prerequisite

- Holding the basic position for at least 5 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

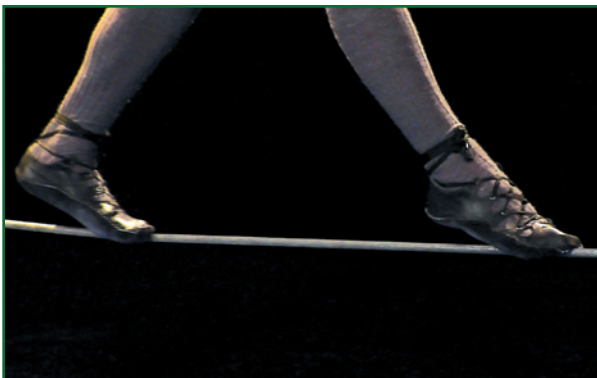
- Take the basic position on the left foot. **M 1**
- Position the toes of the right foot on the toes of the left foot. **M 2**
- Slide the toes of the right foot along the wire, keeping the weight on the left foot. **M 3**
- Transfer the weight onto the right foot.
- Lift the left foot and take the basic position with the right foot as quickly as possible. **M 4**
- Get balanced again in basic position before repeating the movement with the other foot.



M 1



M 2



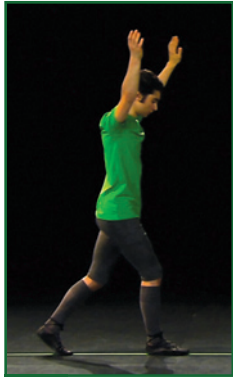
M 3



M 4

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line. **ED 1**
2. Repeat the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance. **ED 2**
3. Move along the wire with manual aid. The instructor continues to go along with the participant with the arm extended and his hand in a fist; the participant should let go of the hand for as long as possible.



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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The participant walks with his body bent over.
3. The participant swings from right to left at each step.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Trying to balance using the arms, the support knee and lateral movements of the free leg.
2. Flexing the knee of the support leg and staying calm.
3. The instructor must help the participant to position his COM over the foot of his support leg.

Variants

1. Forward walk holding the basic position on each foot for 10 seconds.
2. Forward walk with small steps.
3. Forward walk with long sliding steps.
4. Walk from one end of the wire to the other, taking the basic position only in case of difficulty.





TIGHTWIRE BOUNCING

Technical Element Description

Walking on the wire with bounces.

Prerequisite

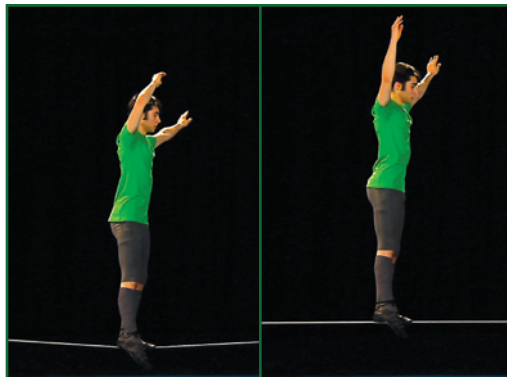
- Holding the basic position for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

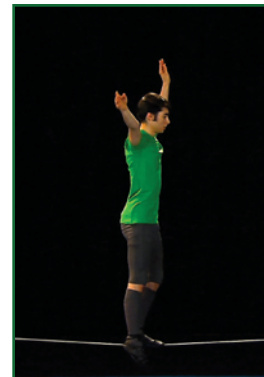
- Take the basic position on one foot. **M 1**
- Make the wire bounce three times by bending the knee of the support leg. **M 2**
- Stop the bounces by bending the knee of the support leg again, like stopping a bounce on a trampoline. **M 3**
- Slide onto the other foot.
- Repeat the movement with the other foot.



M 1



M 2

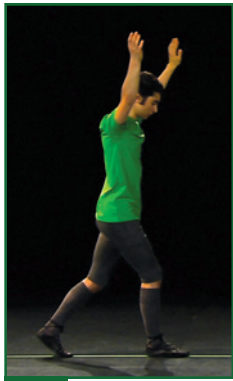


M 3

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line. **ED 1**
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant loses his balance when bouncing.
2. The participant tries to balance with the upper body.
3. The participant bends the support leg without making the wire bounce.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Working with the arms.
2. Keeping the upper body very solid; moving only the arms and legs.
3. Bending the support leg only for starting and stopping the bounces.

Variants

1. Multiple bounces, 5 to 10 on each leg.
2. Alternate between walking lightly and bouncing.





TIGHTWIRE BACKWARDS WALK

Technical Element Description

Backwards walking on the wire.

Prerequisite

- Holding the basic position for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- Take the basic position on the left foot. **M 1**
- Bring the right foot back; position the toes on the wire, touching the left heel. **M 2**
- Position the right foot and transfer the COM over this foot. **M 3**
- Lift the left foot off the wire to take the basic position on the right foot. **M 4**
- Get balanced again in basic position before sequencing and repeating the movement with the other foot.



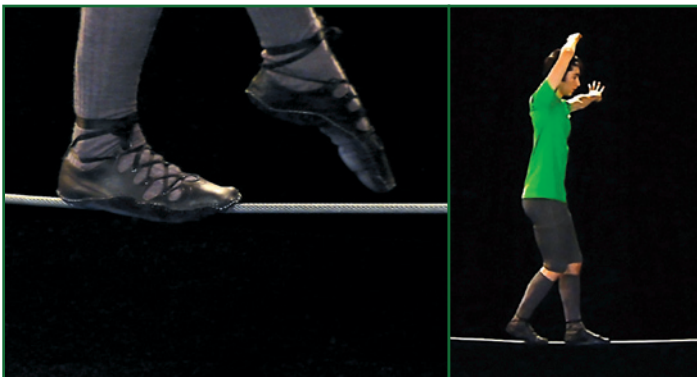
M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4



Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line. **ED 1**
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant moves backwards too quickly.
2. The participant has his legs straight.
3. The participant falls.
4. The participant walks with his body bent over.
5. The participant swings from right to left at each step.

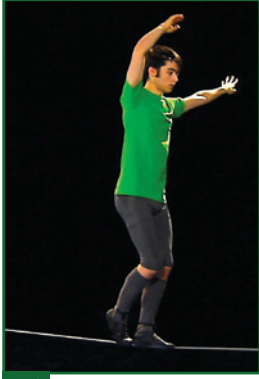
Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the COM over the leg of support. Maintaining the basic position for at least 3 seconds before continuing.
2. Maintaining the basic position for at least 3 seconds before continuing.
3. Holding the basic position for as long as possible before moving back onto the other foot.
4. Looking at the end of the wire and bending the support leg.
5. Bending the support leg. Keeping the upper body centred and solid, and moving only the forearms.

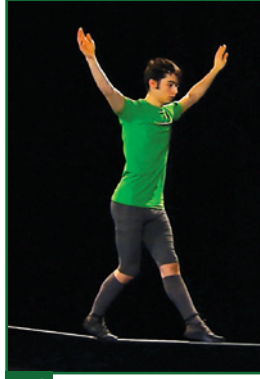


Variants

1. Backwards walk with small steps, without bounces. **V 1**
2. Backwards walk with long steps, without bounces. **V 2**
3. Backwards walk without basic position.

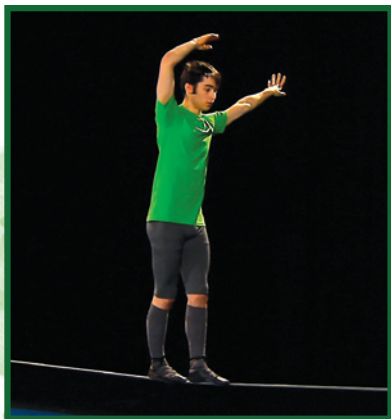


V 1



V 2





TIGHTWIRE BALANCING ON TWO FEET

Technical Element Description

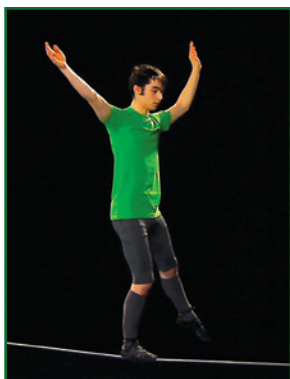
Maintaining balance with two feet on the wire.

Prerequisite

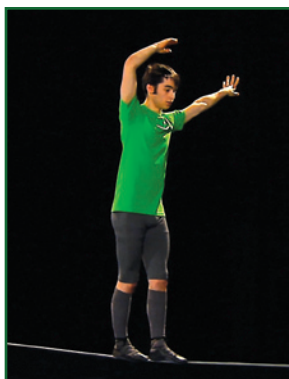
- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

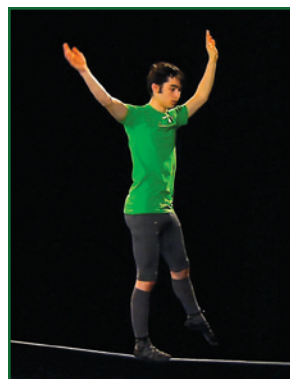
- Take the basic position on one foot. **M 1**
- Position the other foot in front of the first, touching it, with the COM in the middle of both feet.
- Straighten the legs and hold for 10 seconds, trying to balance with the arms alone. **M 2**
- Take the basic position and go on with the other foot in front. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Try the movement without assistance on the wire, holding for an increasingly longer time before taking the basic position.



Manual Aid

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



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The participant moves his body from right to left.
3. The participant bends his legs as though he were on a skateboard.

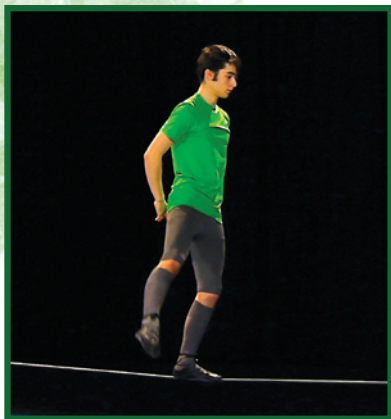
Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Taking back the basic position before losing balance.
2. Keeping the upper body solid and moving only the forearms.
3. Locking the torso and moving only the forearms.

Variants

1. Balancing with the feet separated.
2. Going up on demi-pointe.





TIGHTWIRE BALANCING HANDS BEHIND BACK

Technical Element Description

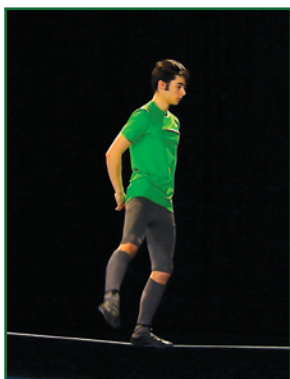
Holding the basic position with both hands behind the back.

Prerequisite

- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- Take the basic position on one foot.
- Gently lower the hands behind the back.
- Hold the position for 5 to 10 seconds, trying to balance only with the two legs. Bend and straighten the support leg. **M 1**
- Lift the arms back up.
- Repeat and go on with the other foot.



M 1

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Try the movement without assistance on the wire, holding for an increasingly longer time before taking back the basic position.



Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The participant moves his body from right to left.
3. The participant moves his hips too much.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Taking back the basic position with the hands up before falling.
2. Bending and straightening the support leg more.
3. Keeping a perfect basic position.
(See *Basic position, Tightwire*, p. 7.)

Variants

1. In basic position, balancing with various arm movements.
2. In basic position, balancing with juggling patterns or prop manipulation.
3. Walking with the hands behind the back.





TIGHTWIRE LUNGE

Technical Element Description

Balancing on the wire by sliding one foot backwards.

Prerequisites

- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.
- Balancing on two feet for at least 20 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the basic position on one foot, position the other foot open behind the support leg. **M 1**
- Slowly slide the foot backwards keeping the back leg stretched and keeping the COM over the front leg. **M 2**
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Rise up while keeping the COM over the front leg. **M 3**
- Return to the basic position with the front leg. **M 4**
- Change feet and repeat the lunge with the other leg.



M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4



Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance.
3. Try the movement without assistance, first by limiting the depth and the space between the legs. Hold the lunge position for 5 seconds.

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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant puts too much weight on the back.
2. The participant grips the wire with his toes.
3. The participant tries to balance with his torso or his hips.

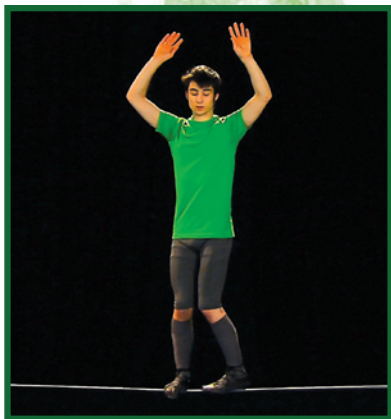
Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Making sure to properly position the foot flat on the wire.
2. Keeping the COM over the front leg.
3. Working the balance with the arms and keeping the upper body solid.

Variants

1. Lunging while looking at the audience to the side.
2. Lunging with a wide step: From the lunge, continuing to go down by sliding back until reaching a wide lunge.





TIGHTWIRE HALF TURN

Technical Element Description

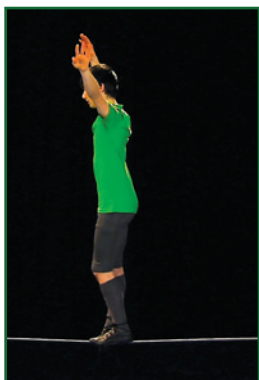
Half turning on the wire from the basic position on one foot.

Prerequisite

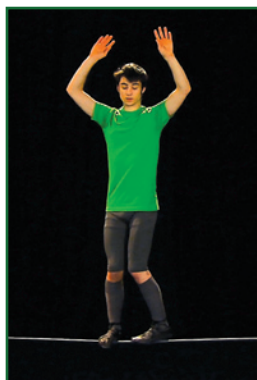
- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- Take the basic position on the left foot. **M 1**
- Position the sole of the right foot in front of the left foot, with internal rotation. **M 2**
- Slightly lift the left foot, turn to the left on the right foot and look at the other end of the wire as quickly as possible.
- Return the left foot to the wire and immediately lift the right foot. **M 3**
- Return to the basic position on the left foot. **M 4**



M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance.



Manual Aid

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



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant's arms drop during the half turn.
2. The participant puts too much weight on the right foot.
3. The participant bends his body.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Developing the reflex of lifting the arms during the half turn. **EX**
2. Keeping the COM over the left foot. The right foot must assist in the turn.
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.



TIGHTWIRE SLIDES

Technical Element Description

Moving while sliding the feet along the wire.

Prerequisites

- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.
- Balancing on two feet for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the basic position, place the other foot in front, in toe-to-heel position. **M 1**
- Slide the front foot forward, with both feet separated. **M 2**
- Slide the back foot up to the heel of the front foot, in toe-to-heel position. **M 3**
- Continue the movement and go on with the sequence.



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance.
3. Practise the movement without assistance, taking the basic position after two slides.
4. Execute the movement without assistance, taking the basic position as seldom as possible.



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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The participant puts too much weight on the front or back leg.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Taking the basic position more quickly.
2. Keeping the COM between the two feet.

Variants

1. Cha-cha-cha: Changing the front foot every three slides. **V 1**
2. Skateboard: Sliding with both feet sideways.



V 1



TIGHTWIRE KNEEL DOWN

Technical Element Description

From the basic position, kneeling on one knee on the wire.

Prerequisites

- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.
- Balancing on two feet for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- Take the basic position on the right foot and slide the left foot forward, transferring the COM between the two feet. **M 1**
- Bend both legs until the knee of the back leg, the right knee, touches the wire and hold the position for 5 seconds. **M 2**
- Get back up into the basic position on the front foot, the left one. **M 3**
- Repeat and go on with the sequence with the other foot. **M 4**



M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4



Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor lets the participant feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with balance.

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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls.
2. The participant lowers the arms.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Returning to the basic position before becoming unbalanced, even in the middle of the movement.
2. Keeping the arms raised and working with the forearms; the legs cannot ensure balance.

Variant

1. In a squat position. V 1



V 1



TIGHTWIRE WALKING WITH RETIRÉS

Technical Element Description

Walking along the wire lifting one leg at a time.

Prerequisites

- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.
- Balancing on two feet for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- Take the basic position on one foot. **M 1**
- Lift the other leg; the foot should touch the knee of the support leg. **M 2**
- Hold the position for 3 seconds.
- Lower the foot and slide along the wire to take a step. **M 3**
- Repeat and go on with the sequence with the other foot.



M 1



M 2



M 3



Educational

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.

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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.



Common Mistakes

1. The participant positions the foot on the wire without sliding.
2. The participant swings to the right every time he lifts the left leg.
3. The participant swings both arms to the right or left during the retiré.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Sliding the foot along the leg until touching the wire with the toes. Continuing to slide for one step.
2. Continuing to work the support leg. Bending and straightening.
3. Avoiding moving the hips too much; thinking “tall.”

Variants

1. Holding the position for 5 to 10 seconds.
2. Moving backwards with retirés.
3. Leg lifts: Instead of a retiré, doing a leg lift. Between the leg lift, the foot slides forward along the wire. **V 3**
4. Strides: Doing retirés with strides over a baton. **V 4**



V 3



V 4



TIGHTWIRE RUNNING WITH OPEN FEET

Technical Element Description

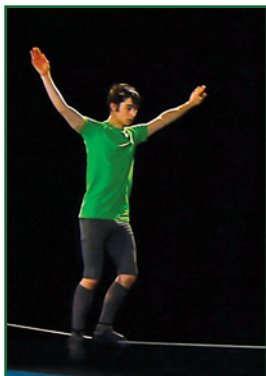
Moving rapidly on the wire with open feet.

Prerequisites

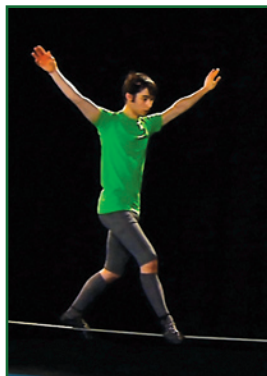
- Holding the basic position for at least 20 seconds.
- Balancing on two feet for at least 10 seconds.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the basic position on one foot, touch the wire with the free foot open. **M 1**
- Once touching the wire, put the foot in open position with the knee bent. **M 2**
- Position the COM over the open foot. **M 3**
- Position the other foot in open position, with the knee bent. **M 4**
- Move forward and go on with the sequence.



M 1



M 2



M 3



M 4

Educationals

1. Do the movement on the floor, on a line.
2. Do the movement on the wire with manual aid. The instructor allows the participant to feel his movements on the wire without being concerned with his balance.
3. Try the movement without assistance. Take three steps in open position and return to the basic position by sliding the foot.
4. Take as many steps as possible before returning to basic position.



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.
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant feels pain on his feet.
2. The participant moves with his legs straight.
3. The participant falls.
4. The participant puts too much weight forward.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Contracting and tightening the toes.
2. Making sure to bend the knees.
3. Working with the arms more and taking the basic position more quickly.
4. Keeping the COM over the support foot until feeling the wire under the other foot.

Variants

1. Running with small steps.
2. Running with long steps.
3. Running with bounces.
4. Running without bounces.
5. Running backwards. **V 5**



V 5

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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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