BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS

HANDSTAND
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
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FOREWORD
NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

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

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

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

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

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

Daniela Arendasova
Director of Studies
National Circus School
Montreal
INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

Collaboration between National Circus School and Cirque du Soleil

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

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

Written documents: The written part of Basic Techniques in Circus Arts comprises 17 chapters, each corresponding to a colour-coded discipline. Every chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduces the terminology specific to the discipline, the equipment required and, specific information, as well as advice about safety and the prevention of injury. The second section illustrates in detail the different technical elements that constitute the discipline. This section comprises a description of the technical elements, detailed explanations of the movement, educational 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 educational 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.
INTRODUCTION – 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

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.
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: M1, M2, etc.

Safety Notice
In addition to the information provided in the first section, the safety notices set out essential aspects to consider when performing the movement in order to avoid injury.
**Educationals**

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 educational 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.

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**Manual Aid**

Assistance that the instructor or the spotter should provide when teaching the movements. The images allow the user to see the movements to make and the actions to take to ensure learning is carried out safely.

**Identified by the icon MA**
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
**Main Menu**

After the opening sequence, a first window presents the disciplines covered on the DVD.

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**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.
HANDSTAND

INTRODUCTION TO HANDSTAND

Practising this age-old acrobatic discipline consists in executing various patterns while balancing on the hands and the head. Handstand is practised both on the floor and on various acrobatic apparatuses, such as canes and parallel bars.

Learning handstand contributes to the development of body awareness, flexibility and muscular endurance.
**TERMINOLOGY**

**Anterior tilt**
Action of tilting the pelvis forward without flexion.

**Arch position**
Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the back, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in an anterior tilt.

**Butterfly**
Action of going from the tuck position to the split, and then returning to the tuck position.

**Candlestick**
Inversion supported on the shoulders.

**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.

**Frog**
Position balancing on the hands with the arms flexed to 90° and the inside of the thighs supported on the elbows.

**Hamstrings**
Muscles on the posterior face of the femur that make up the hip extensors and knee flexors.

**Handstand**
Balancing on the hands.

**Hip extension**
Action of moving the legs and the upper body away from each other, or increasing the torso/leg angle in the standing straight position or a handstand.

**Platform**
Surface providing raised support.

**Posterior tilt**
Action of tilting the pelvis backwards without flexion.

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

**Swimming**
Movement of the legs, starting from the tuck position and extending them into a split while in a handstand.

**Upward arms swing**
Moving the arms, which are outstretched, to a raised position from a lowered position in a synchronous and parallel movement.
SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Body awareness plays a major role in learning handstand. It facilitates proper positioning and alignment. In the beginning, developing body control is more important than holding the balance. It is imperative to provide participants with manual aid in order to help them position their bodies, and to give them clear and precise directions.

Participants can concentrate on body alignment by performing exercises, often with the help of a wall, and working on flexibility at the same time. Note that the most important joints are the wrists, the elbows and the shoulders, and that the most demanding positions are bringing the legs and the torso together, and splits.

The exercises must be done progressively. It is essential to limit repetitions to prevent acute wrist pain during the first weeks of training. A full year of training is often necessary before muscles are sufficiently developed to support the body weight on the hands.

SAFETY

During the first sessions, the participant should avoid balancing for too long and be attentive to wrist pain. If necessary, reduce the frequency and the duration of the elements that are more demanding for the hands.

At all times, the instructor must make sure the participant’s neck is protected and physically supported during descents and falls during the learning phase.

Always make sure participants learn how to get down with different exercises and that they practise in order to prevent uncontrolled falls. For example, from balancing on the hands, the participant can come down into a front roll, a bridge or a front walkover, or sideways in a cartwheel.
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HANDSTAND
TRIPOD

Technical Element Description
Balancing on the head with support on both hands.

Prerequisites
• Body alignment on the back, lying on the ground.
• Front roll. (See Front roll, Acrobatics, p. 23.)

Explanation of the Movement
• From a kneeling position, bend the arms and place the hands under the elbows, forming a triangle with the head.
• Gradually transfer the body weight onto the head, beginning with upper back. Keep the tuck position with the pelvis in posterior tilt until the balance is mastered. M 1
• Once the balance is controlled, the legs can be extended vertically with the feet in line with the back. M 2

Educationals
1. Start in candlestick position. This educational helps to develop the feeling of elongating the body and stretching the pelvis. This can be done with the hands on the hips, the arms extended along the ground behind the back or behind the head.
2. Hold the tuck position in the tripod.
3. Hold the legs in a split position in the tripod.
4. Sequence the tuck position and the legs in a split position several times by making the butterfly movement.
Manual Aid

- Hold the participant’s pelvis and make sure his head is in line with the rest of the body, in order to prevent a backwards fall.

Safety Notice: Teaching the tripod to young children is not recommended because of the risk of injury to the cervical vertebrae.

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant cannot lift up into the tripod.
2. The participant falls backwards while kicking up.
3. The participant is unstable.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Positioning the COM above the base of support. Beginning with the upper back and unrolling it gradually until the pelvis is properly aligned over the back.
2. When the legs are extended, perfectly aligning the feet over the thoracic cage.
3. Placing the elbows over the hands. Keeping the gaze on both hands during the tripod.

### Variants

1. Tripod with the arms outstretched. V 1
2. On the hands, the arms folded over the legs, in frog position, hold the balance resting on the forearms.
HANDSTAND

PLANCHE

Technical Element Description
Balancing horizontally on both hands.

Prerequisites
• Front support in push-up position.
• Back support with hip extension.

Explanation of the Movement
• The participant rests his elbows on his stomach with the arms bent and the hands wider than the elbows. The hands are turned to the back but aligned with the forearms. When the feet and the hands are supported on the ground, the COM should be moved forward until it is over the palm of the hands, with the legs and the head straight; the shoulders as relaxed as possible. M 1

Safety Notice: Perform the exercise on a floor mat since balance is sometimes lost to the front on the first attempts, and the face can hit the ground.

Educationals
1. Make the planche keeping the feet on the ground.
2. Make the planche with the feet on a raised surface.
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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 tilting the pelvis slightly backwards.

Educationals
1. “L” sit on canes or on parallel bars.
2. “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
1. The participant cannot lift the legs.
2. The participant cannot keep the arms straight.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. Performing strengthening exercises for the abdominal muscles. EX
2. Turning the hands toward the outside, the index finger facing front.

Variant
1. “L” sit with legs in a straddle position. V 1
HANDSTAND

Technical Element Description
Maintaining a handstand facing the wall.

Prerequisites
- Lying on the ground, body aligned with a posterior pelvic tilt.
- Front roll. (See Front roll, Acrobatics, p. 23.)
- Cartwheel. (See Cartwheel, Acrobatics, p. 61.)

Explanation of the Movement
- The participant stays balanced facing the wall, for 30 seconds, with the weight on the palms of the hands, the fingers spread apart and bent, the index finger forward aligned with the arms, and the pelvis in a posterior tilt. The shoulders, torso and pelvis are aligned, and the head can be slightly raised. The body must be perfectly aligned, both front to back and side to side. The muscles are contracted, but breathing remains regular. M 1

Note: Pay special attention to the thoracic cage, which should be closed so the back is straight. It is important to support the shoulders so as to stabilize the balance. This helps the participant to learn to open them better.

Educationals
1. Body alignment in standing position.
2. Body alignment lying supine.
Manual Aid
• The spotter helps the participant to get into the handstand and properly align his body. MA 1

Common Mistakes
1. The participant’s shoulders are closed.

2. The participant’s thoracic cage pops out.

3. The pelvis has an anterior tilt.

4. The participant’s hands are not aligned and they are more than shoulder-width apart.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. Aligning the shoulders and the torso.
   Performing flexibility exercises for the shoulders. EX

2. Closing the thoracic cage while keeping an upward arms swing.

3. The spotter must manually help the participant give a posterior tilt to the pelvis.
   Practising the posterior pelvic tilt while standing. EX

4. The spotter must check the width of the shoulders and ask the participant to look at the position of the hands.
**HANDSTAND**

**CARTWHEEL KICK TO HANDSTAND**

**Technical Element Description**
Facing the wall, lifting up in a cartwheel to balance on the hands.

**Prerequisites**
- Handstand facing the wall.
- Cartwheel, both sides. (See *Cartwheel, Acrobatics*, p. 61.)

**Explanation of the Movement**
- Put one hand at a time on the ground while keeping the body parallel facing the wall. The hands should be shoulder-width apart and the body properly aligned, with a posterior pelvic tilt.
- It is important to correctly position the shoulder of the first hand vertically and move the body over the support hand, beginning with the upper body. M 1

**Educationals**
1. Perform a cartwheel kick to handstand with manual aid. The spotter supports the hips during the upward movement into the handstand and aligns the body, making sure the participant does an upward arms swing, the thoracic cage is closed and the pelvis has a posterior tilt.
2. Perform a cartwheel kick to handstand, hold the handstand and roll back down to the ground on the opposite side to the wall. (See *Handstand front roll, Acrobatics*, p. 26.)

**Manual Aid**
- The spotter helps the participant to get into the handstand and properly align his body. MA 1
Common Mistakes

1. The participant falls backwards.

2. The participant has trouble kicking up.

3. The participant’s shoulders drop to the front.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the back straight and the legs aligned over the shoulders and the hands.

2. Making sure to correctly place the shoulders over the hands, especially the first hand.

3. Aligning the shoulders vertically when kicking up.
HANDSTAND
HANDSTAND, DISMOUNT FROM BLOCKS

Technical Element Description
In a handstand on blocks facing the wall, descending to the ground.

Prerequisite
• Handstand facing the wall.

Explanation of the Movement
• In a handstand on blocks facing the wall, transfer the body weight onto one hand in a pendulum movement. Move the block to the outside and bend the support arm to move the other hand to the ground. M 1
• Transfer the weight to the hand on the ground, move the other block and put the second hand on the ground. Bend one arm during the descent, properly align the body and the COM over the support, and move the entire body at the same time. M 2
Educationals

1. Supported against the wall, perform a controlled pendulum movement with manual aid on the ground.

2. Coming down from one block with manual aid: The spotter holds the participant’s legs and hips in order to guide him during the weight transfer and to promote proper body alignment.

Manual Aid

• The spotter helps the participant to control the pendulum movement and properly align his body. MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant loses his body alignment.

2. The participant has difficulty controlling the transfer of weight onto one hand.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the hips aligned during weight transfer from one hand to another. Always performing weight transfer like a pendulum by keeping the body as a whole unit from the shoulders to the feet.

2. Bending the arm on the supporting side to maintain alignment during the descent. Keeping the shoulder properly aligned vertically over the support hand.

Variant

1. Handstand on blocks, legs in a straddle position.
HANDSTAND
KICK TO HANDSTAND

Technical Element Description
Kicking to handstand and balancing on the hands.

Prerequisites

• Handstand facing the wall.
• Front roll. (See Front roll, Acrobatics, p. 23.)

Explanation of the Movement

• From the standing position, go up into handstand one leg at a time, using the kick-off leg to push against the ground. M 1
• Once in the handstand, put the legs together. Separate the legs during the descent. M 2

Educationals

1. Kick to handstand with manual aid: The spotter lightly holds one of the participant’s ankles and guides him backwards, supporting him until his nape is resting on the ground. The participant then continues into a front roll. ED 1
2. Kick to handstand, then fall into a roll on the floor mat.
Common Mistakes
1. The participant has trouble kicking up.
2. The participant falls backwards.
3. The participant is unstable.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. Waiting to be in handstand before bringing the legs together. Positioning the shoulders over the hands while kicking up in order to subsequently unroll through the back.
2. Positioning the legs over the base of support and correctly aligning the entire body.
3. Trying to balance with the hands and not with the legs or hips.

Manual Aid
• Align all the segments of the body, paying special attention to the thoracic cage and the upward arms swing. Once the participant is in the handstand, the instructor holds his legs. MA 1
• The instructor lightly holds one of the participant’s ankles and guides him backwards, supporting him until his nape is resting on the ground. The participant then continues into a front roll.
HANDSTAND
PRESS TO HANDSTAND TUCK

Technical Element Description
Pressing to handstand tuck and balancing on the hands.

Prerequisites
• Handstand facing the wall.
• Tripod.
• Posterior pelvic tilt exercise.

Explanation of the Movement
• From the kneeling position, the hands should be turned to the outside, with the index finger forward. M 1
• Straighten the legs and transfer the COM over the hands, keeping the pelvis in posterior tilt and unroll gradually from the upper body to the lower body. M 2
• Take the tuck position, keeping the legs lower than the pelvis in order to make positioning easier. M 3
• Make a controlled descent by extending the legs before moving the pelvis.

Notes: It is important to keep the pelvis in a posterior tilt while extending the legs. Always try to balance with the hands, not with the hips. A fluid and even lift is vital.

Educationals
1. Press to handstand tuck with support on an inclined surface: With the hands on the ground and the shoulders supported on an inclined platform, the participant pushes lightly with the feet and unrolls his back slowly, one vertebra at a time, in order to properly position his back. The platform should be inclined to the back at approximately 110° to 120°. ED 1
2. Straighten the legs slowly to learn how to unroll the back. Avoid pushing on the feet to lift the legs up. ED 2
Manual Aid

• The instructor controls the participant’s balance, one hand on his back, the other holding his knees. MA 1

• During the exercise, the instructor holds the participant’s shoulders aligned with one hand while the other hand rests on the hamstrings to keep the pelvis in posterior tilt and the thoracic cage closed. During the descent, the participant must maintain the pelvic and shoulder alignment while extending the legs.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant cannot kick to handstand.

2. The participant falls backwards.

3. The participant cannot stay balanced.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Unrolling the back, starting with the upper back, while maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt. Straightening the legs equally before transferring the COM over the hands.

2. Maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt, with the back straight and a good tuck position.

3. Keeping the shoulders over the hands and trying to balance with the hands and not with the rest of the body.
HANDSTAND
PRESS TO HANDSTAND STRADDLE

Technical Element Description
From kneeling, pressing to into handstand with a straddle split.

Prerequisites
• Handstand facing the wall.
• Tripod.

Explanation of the Movement
• From the kneeling position, the hands should be turned to the outside, with the index finger forward. **M 1**

• Straighten the legs while transferring the COM over the hands, starting with the upper back and maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt. Put the legs in the straddle position. **M 2**

**Note:** The start is the same as for the press to handstand tuck position. Emphasize mainly on the back’s position before putting the legs in the straddle position.
**Educationals**

1. Press to handstand straddle position with support on an inclined platform.

2. Press to handstand straddle position with manual aid: The spotter holds the participant’s shoulders with one hand while putting the other hand on his ribs to maintain body alignment. During the descent, the participant must maintain the alignment of the pelvis and the shoulders when extending the legs.

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant cannot kick up to handstand.

2. The participant falls backwards.

3. The participant has trouble maintaining balance.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Unrolling the back, starting from the upper back, while maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt.

2. Maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt with the back straight. The legs should be lower than the pelvis.

3. Keeping the shoulders over the hands and trying to balance with the hands and not the rest of the body.
HANDSTAND

HOLD HANDSTAND IN TUCK POSITION

Technical Element Description
Lifting up into tuck handstand and holding for 5 seconds.

Prerequisites
• Tuck tripod.
• Handstand facing the wall.

Explanation of the Movement
• From the kneeling position, spread the hands, with the weight over the palms of the hands, and close the thoracic cage.
• Lift up into handstand by transferring the COM over the hands, while aligning the shoulders and the back over the hands.
• Unroll the back. Maintain the posterior pelvic tilt while bringing the thighs toward the thoracic cage. Try to balance with the hands and not the legs or pelvis.
• Make a controlled descent by extending the legs before moving the pelvis.

Educationals
1. Handstand in tuck position with manual aid: The instructor helps the participant keep his shoulders aligned by pressing on his shoulder blades; then he presses the ribs in as the participant kicks up into the handstand.
2. Press to handstand in tuck position with support on an inclined platform.

Common Mistakes
1. The participant arches his back.
2. The participant falls backwards.
3. The participant is unstable.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. Opening up the shoulders and drawing the ribs in.
2. Maintaining the posterior pelvic tilt.
3. Checking the body alignment and the proper position of the hands, with the COM over the palms of the hands. Trying to balance with the hands and not the hips, shoulders or legs.
Variants

1. Butterfly: From the handstand in tuck position, extend the legs laterally into a handstand straddle split position. Flex the knees and bring the legs to the front to return to the handstand in tuck position. V 1

2. Swimming: From the handstand in tuck position, extend the legs until they are vertical; separate and lower the legs to the side into a straddle split. Flex the knees and bring the legs to the front to return to the tuck position. Extend the legs laterally again into the straddle split, bring the legs together vertically, bend the knees and bring the legs to the front to return to the original position. V 2
The mission of Fondation Cirque du Soleil™ is to promote the circus arts as a development tool to help disadvantaged groups, especially at-risk youth, increase their creative potential, social skills and physical capacity. The foundation also ensures that all revenues from the distribution of Cirque du Soleil™ educational material will be reinvested in the company’s social and cultural programs.

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.