

Teaching Tips on Acrobatics

Do you want to learn how to do some basic acrobatics? Then this page is for you. This page is designed to teach whoever wants to learn, but we intend for you to practice these skills with an instructor. However, the instructional language and videos in this page may also prove helpful for coaches themselves.

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Disclaimer:

This guide is in no way a substitute for real instruction with a live coach. AYCO recommends learning with a real coach whenever possible.

Always use a mat when learning acrobatics you have never tried before.

Always stretch before tumbling.

Always use a spotter.

Do not attempt acrobatics without adult supervision.

Forward Rolls

The first move you will learn is the forward roll, one of the most basic moves in acrobatics. You will use this base in a number of other tricks. Make sure you stretch your neck and wrists beforehand.

- Start by squatting with your hands spread shoulder width apart on the floor.
- Tuck your head and look at your belly button so your chin touches your chest. Pretend there is glue keeping your chin in place. This will make sure you keep your chin tucked the entire time. You don't want to land on your neck and hurt yourself.
- Roll forward.
- Make sure you are rolling onto your shoulders, NOT your neck.
- You should end up (once you get good at this) in a squatting position again.

Check out this instructional video for how to do a forward roll. (Since this is a video for gymnastics you can disregard what she says about beginning from a stand. It is perfectly acceptable to begin the forward roll from a squat):

Here are a few written sources:

<http://www.drillsandskills.com/article/7>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Forward-Roll>

Backward Rolls

The backward roll is basically the forward roll in reverse, but it is usually a little harder to master at first. Stretch your neck and wrists before you attempt this.

- Begin in the same squatting position as with the forward roll.
- Put your hands out by your ears with your palms facing up. It helps to think you're holding a pizza in each hand.
- Roll backwards.
- When your head touches the mat put your palms flat against the mat and push. Imagine you are squishing the pizzas on the floor.
- Once your feet go over your head should land in the squatting position you began in.

Here is a video demonstrating how to do a backwards roll:

Here are a few written sources:

<http://www.drillsandskills.com/article/9>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Backward-Roll>

Backbend or Bridge

A backbend requires some flexibility so it is very important to stretch all your muscles beforehand. Make sure you stretch your wrists, ankles, arms, shoulders, and spine.

- Begin by standing with your feet shoulder length apart.
- Put your hands straight up by your ears.
- Reach high up to the ceiling and look at your fingers.
- Push your hips out. It helps to have your spotter hold you by the hips.
- Keep your eyes on your hands and slowly lower your hands down to the floor.

What's the difference between a bridge and a backbend? Some people say a bridge is when you push up from the ground into the position, and a backbend is when you fall into the position from standing. However, there are many people use these two terms interchangeably and there may not be any difference. It just depends on who you're talking to.

For a breakdown of how to do a backbend, look at this video:

For more written sources:

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/contortion-backbend-training-learn-how-to-do-a-backbend.html>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Backbend>

Splits

The splits require flexibility. Lots of people are naturally flexible and can go into the splits right away without practice. For most other people it takes time, stretching, and practice to achieve a good split.

First you need to start with a few flexibility stretches to get your body used to getting into the split position. Make sure you NEVER bounce while stretching. Practice these stretches every day to increase your flexibility. Remember this often takes time. Do not push your body too hard because you can hurt yourself.

Butterfly Stretch

- Begin in a seated position with your feet together and slowly bring your knees apart.
- Bring your heels in as close to your body as you can and gently push your knees down as far as possible.
- Keep your back straight to maintain good posture.
- To increase the stretch lean forward as far as you can. Reach with your arms and rest them on the floor.
- Hold this stretch for 30-60 seconds.

Pike Stretch

- Begin in a seated position with your legs together and toes pointed.
- Lean forward with a straight back.
- Touch your toes, or reach past your toes if you can.
- Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds.

Pancake Stretch

- From seated straddle your legs as far as feels comfortable.
- Make sure your legs are straight and toes pointed.
- Lean forward and reach out as far as you can with your arms straight.
- Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds.

Lunge Stretch

- Begin standing with your legs locked together.
- Take a large step forward with your right leg and kneel on the ground with the other leg.
- Straighten your right leg out.
- Lean forward and try to touch your nose to your knee.
- Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds.
- Repeat this stretch with your left leg.

Practice these stretches every day. Make sure you can perform all of the stretches without pain before you move onto a split.

Now you can try the side splits.

- Begin in a wide standing straddle position with your toes pointed forward.
- Slowly slide down into split position.
- Stop if you feel any pain.
- Slide as slow as you can and hold for 30 seconds.
- Repeat the stretch and see if you can get any lower.
- Do the stretch routine every day until you accomplish your splits.

After you get your splits if you want to increase your flexibility even more, you can work on your oversplits. Oversplits are when you prop your front leg on an object to add height and stretch even more. You can try pillows, books, stools, chairs, boxes, or basically anything that will lift your foot higher off the ground.

Center splits

Now that you have your side splits down, all your stretching has prepared you for your center splits. To get your center splits try straddling against the wall. Scoot closer and closer until you have a split. You can also practice by lying on your back, doing a straddle, and pushing your legs down. Keep practicing and soon you will have your center split.

Check out this instructional video on how to do the splits:

Here are a few written sources:

<http://www.body-fizzeek.co.uk/splits.htm>

<http://www.body-fizzeek.co.uk/splits.htm>

Handstand

A handstand is a move that requires body strength, control, and a lot of practice. Make sure you stretch your wrists, arms, and shoulders.

First you will learn how your body should feel when you are in a handstand. When you get in the air you will know if are correctly positioned.

- Lay down on the floor on your back.
- Put your arms up by your ears. Reach up and extend so your shoulders are by your ears.
- Pull your belly button in so the small of your back touches the ground. You should not have an arch. This is also called hollow body position.

- Point your toes.

If you have never done a handstand before you want to start against a wall. Make sure you have plenty of space all around you.

- Stand facing the wall with your arms up by your ears.
- Lunge forward and place your hands shoulder width apart in front of the wall.
 - o Make sure your hands are SHOULDER length apart. People tend to overestimate where their shoulders are and then their hands are too far apart.
- Your fingers should be spread out slightly and facing the wall.
- Use your lunge momentum to kick one leg up to the wall. Follow with the other leg.
- Try to kick up lightly and rest your feet on the wall. Do not slam your feet into the wall. This will teach you how much to kick up when there is no wall.
- Take your feet off the wall. Point your toes toward the ceiling and try to balance.

Body position is a very important part of handstands. Once you are in the air you want to check to be sure your body is in the proper position.

- Make sure your legs are straight and pulled together. Point your toes toward the ceiling.
- Tighten your abs and pull your belly button in.
- Extend your shoulders. Think of this like a shrug or pushing into the floor. Your shoulders should be by your ears.
- Keep your head in-between your shoulders. Do not look up and lift your head. Instead peek at your hands without moving your head.
- Spread your fingers out slightly and face them forward.

Now you need to start practicing without the crutch. Move away from the wall into an open space.

Remember from your practice against the wall how hard you have to kick up without falling over. Try and stay upside-down for as long as you can and increase the time you stay up with each handstand. This will help build up your strength.

You are going to fall sometimes. Don't be afraid. There are two ways to avoid falling onto your face or in a messy heap:

- The roll. When you start to fall forward just turn your fall into a forward roll. Tuck your chin in, bend your arms slowly, and roll onto your shoulders.
- The pirouette. This is for when you are falling backward. Twist your shoulders and walk one hand around. Your body should do a 90 degree turn. The turn will let you step out of the handstand without falling over.

Here's a video showing how to handstands:

Here is a really great in depth written guide with pictures:

<http://www.beastskills.com/tutorials/tutorials/33>

And another written source:

<http://gymnastics.about.com/od/skillhowtos/ss/handstand.htm>

Cartwheel

Cartwheels are one of the most basic tumbling skills. They are also really fun and a good way to strengthen your upper body. Make sure you stretch your legs, back, and arms first.

- Begin in a lunge with your strong leg in front. Most people favor one leg over the other, but if you do not know which leg is stronger you can try with both. You will quickly figure out which leg you prefer.
- Raise your arms high above your head by your ears.
- Bend your front leg and your body will form a straight line from your back leg through to your arms.
- Put your hands on the ground. The hand closest to your lead foot will hit first, quickly followed by the second hand.
- Use your lead leg to propel your feet upward. Your legs should form a nice big straddle in the air.
- The landing should be a mirror image of the beginning. Your original back foot will hit the ground first, followed by your original front foot.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!

REMEMBER: The pattern for a cartwheel is hand, hand, foot, foot.

Make sure your body travels in a straight line the entire time.

Here is a video for how to do cartwheels:

Here are a few written sources:

<http://www.robbinssports.com/sports-blog/2006/07/21/how-to-do-a-cartwheel/>

http://cheerleading.about.com/od/gymnasticsandtumbling/1/bl_cartwheel.htm

Front Walkover

Front walkovers require practice and flexibility. In order to do a front walkover you need to be able to do a good handstand and a bridge. If you don't know how to do one or both you can learn at our handstand or bridge sections (anchor to sections). It's especially important to stretch your wrists, arms, shoulders, legs, ankles, and back.

- Start by standing up straight with your arms raised up by your ears.
- Bring your hands toward the ground as if you're about to do a handstand. Make sure one foot is lifted in the air.
- Lift into a handstand, but make sure both feet are apart in a wide straddle.
- Continue through the handstand. You should land in a bridge with one leg high in the air.
- Use your hands and abs to lift yourself out of the bridge. Do not let the leg in the air touch the ground until you are standing fully upright again. End with your arms high up in the air.

Here's a video for how to do a front walkover:

Here are a few other written sources:

http://www.flashmavi.com/gymnastics_how_to_do_a_front_walkover.shtml

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Front-Walkover>

Back Walkover

A back walkover is a move that requires a lot of arm strength. If your arms are not strong enough you will not be able to support your weight, which is very dangerous. Make sure your arms and shoulders are strong enough before attempting this move.

The back walkover is another move that requires previous knowledge of handstands and bridges. If you do not know how to do one or both check out our [handstand](#) and [bridge](#) sections. Stretching is really important with this move so make sure you stretch your wrists, arms, ankles, legs, back, and shoulders.

Before you attempt a back walkover you first need to master a **back kickover**.

- Begin in a standing position with your strong foot forward. Put your arms up high by your ears.
- Lean backward into a backbend.
- From your backbend you are going to kick over with your front leg and push through with your back leg.
- As you go forward make sure you push your chest forward over your hands to gain forward momentum. Make sure your shoulders are directly over your hands as this makes the whole process much easier.
- Then stand up straight.
- Practice makes perfect so keep practicing until you get it down pat. Don't move onto the back walkover until you have perfected the back kickover.

Now you can try the back walkover. If this is your first time to try a back walkover, make sure you use a spotter to help you!

- Begin in a standing position with your strong foot forward. Put your arms up high by your ears.
- Lead back with your fingertips and go down into a backbend. Make sure you push your hips forward.
- Raise your lead leg and when your hands touch the ground push off with your other leg. Your feet should form a wide split in the air. Make this one continuous motion.
- Land with your lead front in front, quickly followed by your other foot.
- This is will take a lot of practice, but keep at it.

If you would like to see a video for how to do a back kickover and back walkover, look here:

Here are a few other written sources:

<http://en.allexperts.com/q/Gymnastics-2245/walkovers-handsprings.htm>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Back-Walkover>

Skills Progression

Once you have mastered the basics we have covered in this page you can move onto more advanced skills. Here is a list of the progression of skills, including more advanced moves people go on to learn from here. We will not be including instructions for these skills as they should only be learned from a live coach.

Forward Rolls

Backward Rolls

Backbend

Handstand

Cartwheel

Front Walkover

Back Walkover

Roundoff

Aerial Cartwheel

Back Handspring

Front Handspring

Jessica N. Lipscomb 2011

Juggling

Teaching Tips on Juggling

Juggling is a skill that looks hard, but is really quite easy to learn. With all these resources and plenty of practice you will be juggling in no time.

Some important things to remember:

- Make sure you have plenty of space to practice in. You don't want to be hitting people with your juggling props!
- Juggling takes lots of practice. Don't be discouraged if it takes you awhile to get the pattern down.
- Many people begin juggling with their right hand only. It's important to practice starting off with both your left and right hand. Try to alternate which hand you begin with every time. You want them both to be strong!

Make sure you check out the International Juggler's Association's website for numerous instructions on how to juggle different objects, juggling videos, and lots of information on what's going on with juggling festivals and events. This site is a wealth of juggling knowledge!

<http://www.juggle.org/>

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Scarves

A good place for beginners to start is by juggling scarves. Since scarves are lightweight it slows down the process, making it easier for beginners to grasp the patterns without having to worry about fast reaction times. Scarves are also very pretty to juggle.

Here is a video showing how to juggle scarves:

Here are some written instructions:<http://www.jugglingworld.biz/index.php?/Juggling-Tricks/4-ball-juggling-tricks.html>

Balls

When you think of juggling, you probably envision someone tossing balls in the air. Balls are one of the most common objects to juggle because they are simple to use and readily available. It is easier to begin by juggling **bean bags** which are very similar to balls, but they don't roll away when they are dropped on the floor (something that will happen a lot at first). **Juggling balls** are usually very colorful and therefore quite visible, though they do roll to a certain extent. You can use practically any round object to juggle from tennis balls to apples, even eggs (once you get good enough!). **Bounce juggling balls** are designed to be thrown down and bounced off the floor rather than being thrown in the air. These balls are often made of silicon and roll away quite easily.

Balls are a good way to learn juggling patterns and there are plenty of tricks to learn. However, many people move onto juggling other objects because many tricks cannot be performed with balls. Since balls are round, the view is the same from every angle, whereas you can spin and twist other objects such as clubs. Also, passing is not as interesting to watch with balls because they are smaller and do not twist.

Here is a video for how to juggle three balls:

Here is a step by step written guide with pictures teaching you how to juggle three balls.
[ICircus Juggling Instructions.pdf](#)

Here are some guides on how to juggle four balls:

Written:<http://www.jugglingworld.biz/index.php?/Juggling-Tricks/4-ball-juggling-tricks.html>

If you are interested in bounce juggling check out this site. It has instructions, videos, tricks, and frequently asked questions:

<http://www.juggling.org/help/balls/bounce-faq.html>

Here are a few databases with lots of tricks for juggling balls:

<http://learnhowtojuggle.info/juggling-tricks/>

<http://www.kingscascade.com/JugglingTricks.html>

<http://www.jugglinginstructions.com/>

Rings

Rings are often the next step people move on to from juggling balls. The large size of rings makes them popular props to pass with, and also a favorite for the stage because they can be viewed very easily from a distance. There are a couple of different types of rings. Most **rings** are brightly colored large circles made from lightweight plastic. These rings are greatly affected by wind, and therefore it is usually best to juggle with them indoors. One downside to rings is that they can hurt if caught incorrectly. **Fat rings** are rings of hollow plastic about a half inch thick. These do not hurt as much when catching, and they are also a favorite for passing because they are much easier to see. **Color changing rings** are another popular type of

ring. These rings are painted a different color on each side. The juggler flips them over quickly to make it look like the color of the ring has changed. This is a very visually pleasing trick to watch. There are also a variety of other possibilities available for ring tricks.

Here is video on how to juggle rings:

As well as some written instructions:

<http://www.jugglingpoet.com/crju/rings.html>

Here is a database with lots of tricks for juggling rings:

<http://www.jugglingworld.biz/index.php?/Juggling-Tricks/ring-juggling-tricks.html>

This is an eHow series with 15 videos for different tricks with rings:http://www.ehow.com/videos-on_52_ring-juggling-tricks-techniques.html

Clubs

Clubs are a very popular juggling prop. If you know how to juggle balls, juggling clubs is an easy extension. While clubs are a little harder to master because they spin, that is exactly the reason they are so interesting to watch. People often confuse club with bowling pins. Although they are certainly not the same, many people do refer to clubs as pins, which is entirely appropriate. There are many different types, makes, and sizes of clubs; the preference is often decided by the individual juggler. There are clubs made of wood, one piece plastic clubs, and multi-piece plastic clubs. **One piece club**s tend to be less popular because the hard plastic often hurts when catching. **Multi-piece club**s have a wooden dowel running through the center to create air flow and make the clubs softer to catch. Most clubs have soft rubber pads on the ends. The decorations for clubs are endless and only limited to juggler's imagination. Decorations can range from plain, multi colored, sparkly, light up or even glow in the dark.

Clubs are very popular for passing because they are larger than balls and have a handle which makes them easier to catch. Club passing is also considered a very impressive sight. Clubs are juggled in the same cascade pattern as balls. Almost all tricks that can be performed with balls can also be done with clubs. However, the tricks are often more difficult to perform because of the club's larger size and rotation.

Here are some guides for how to juggle clubs:

How to Video:

This site has a few videos with club tricks:

<http://www.ehow.com/juggling-club-tricks/>

Written:<http://www.wikihow.com/Juggle-Three-Clubs>

<http://www.jugglingpoet.com/crju/clubs.html>

Pass Juggling

Pass juggling is a very social way to interact with other jugglers. Most people prefer to use clubs for passing because the handle makes it easier to catch, plus the spinning clubs are very entertaining to watch. Passing can be performed with balls, but it is not as common, probably because it is not as interesting to watch. Once you start to get the hang of it, passing clubs is often considered addictive and very fun. In fact, once you get good you don't even need to limit yourself to one partner! Large groups can pass clubs together, as long as everyone understands the patterns. There are also many tricks you can incorporate with pass juggling, such as over the leg and behind the back throws.

To begin pass juggling first and foremost you need a partner. Make sure you both know the basics of how to juggle three clubs. When you pass juggle you will be passing six clubs between two people, so if you're not really sure how to juggle clubs on your own it's going to be a little difficult. If you don't both already have juggling clubs down pat, take a look at our [club juggling guide](#) for some help.

Here are several pass juggling guides:

This is good step by step video teaching how to pass juggle:

Written guide:

<http://www.jugglingpoet.com/crju/passing.html>

This site has several common passing patterns and tricks:

<http://seehuhn.de/pages/passing>

Diabolo

The diabolo is an hourglass shape made of two half cones that is spun on a string. The string is connected to two sticks which are held one in each hand. The diabolo is placed in the center of the string and can be spun, whirled around, tossed, or multiple diabolos can be spun at one time. There are many different tricks that can be performed with the diabolo. Diabolos come in various different colors, sizes, and makes. Diabolos are usually either made of rubber, plastic, or a hybrid of both. The sticks can also be made out of different materials, usually wood, aluminum, or fiberglass.

The diabolo is often misspelled diablo, which is where it got its former nickname "the devil on two sticks." The diabolo originated as a Chinese yo-yo and is still used in Chinese dances today.

Beginning video:

Here is a written guide to help you start out as well as some tricks:

<http://www.insane-circus.freewebspace.com/basics.html>

Tricks: <http://www.diabolotricks.com/>

Cigar Boxes

Cigar box juggling is pretty self explanatory from the name; it is the act of juggling cigar boxes. Most often three boxes are used at a time, but it is possible to use more. Tricks usually begin with the three boxes together in a line. The boxes should look as if they are glued together or floating, but this is just an illusion. Cigar boxes can also be stacked using seven, nine, or eleven boxes for a great visual effect. Cigar box juggling is a little different from juggling other props such as balls or clubs because cigar box juggling is not a continuous motion. Cigar boxes employ a “stop and start” method, basically after each trick the boxes must be set up again into their original position for the next trick. Real cigar boxes are not used for this process because they are not very durable, although at one point in time they were. Today the boxes are specially made for this purpose and they are made out of wood or plastic with a special tape or plastic gripping around the sides. Many tricks can be done with cigar boxes including stacking, balancing, manipulation, and midair box exchanges.

Here is a video showing many tricks you can do with cigar boxes:

This site breaks down postures, movements, and various tricks in a 16 part series:

http://www.ehow.com/video_4412553_cigar-box-juggling_.html

This site has lots of videos that slow down the tricks so you can grasp them better:

<http://www.toddstrong.com/cigarboxes.php>

Poi

Poi is a form of juggling where two balls connected by a string are swung around the body. Poi originated as a Maori performance art and has since been picked up by spinners around the globe. While spinning two connected balls may at first seem to have a limited number of tricks, that is not the case. There are many tricks that can be done with poi including spinning both balls in the same direction, spinning them in different directions, weaving the balls between each other, wrapping the poi around something, and even behind the back or above the head moves just to name a few. Poi tend to be heavy and may cause the spinner or bystanders bruises or minor injuries if hit, so it’s important to keep your space from other people while doing poi. There are many several different types of poi. Beginners often find it helpful to begin with **sock poi**, which are socks filled with soft materials such as juggling balls, tennis balls, bean bags, etc. These do not hurt as much if you are hit with them. If you would like to learn how to make your own sock poi click here.

Fabric poi is made out of soft fabric that is also less painful if hit with. Fabric poi is often very colorful and well liked for performers. Many fabric poi have the option of adding a comet or tail to the end of balls. This tail trails along after the poi and provides a very pretty visual effect. However, for beginners comets are not recommended because they can get tangled very easily.

LED Poi have bright lights inside the poi that create very beautiful effects in the dark. Many of these are heavier and can be painful if hit. These are a great option for pretty visual effects without the dangers of fire poi.

Glowstick Poi are also very stunning in the dark because they glow. The difference is that instead of light up balls, as with the LED poi, these are simply glowsticks attached to strings or shoelaces. This is called “glowstringing” and is often practiced at festivals and raves.

Fire Poi are made with a chain and use a special wick soaked in kerosene or another type of fuel to create swinging fire balls. Fire poi are very dazzling to watch, but can be very dangerous. No one under the age of 18 should engage in fire poi, unless they have written parental consent. Fire safety standards must also be adhered to when using fire poi.

Here is a playlist of beginner poi videos:

<http://www.playpoi.com/poi-basics>

More videos from the same people:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xm_sw1KePHg&NR=1&feature=fvwp

Another site with great written instructions and videos for each step. It has beginning through complex tricks:

http://www.homeofpoi.com/lessons_all/teach/Neck-Wrap-new-video-3_16_186

Devil Sticks

Devil sticks are made up of three different sticks: the main stick and two control sticks. The control sticks are held in both hands and are used to manipulate the center stick by tossing it back and forth. There are a wide variety of tricks that can be performed with devil sticks ranging from spinning, twisting, and twirling, to balancing the center stick on different body parts to juggling the baton with another person. The act of doing devil sticks is often called sticking, twirling, or devil sticking.

Devil sticks can come in a number of sizes and makes, but most often the main stick is 20-30 inches long and the handles are 15-20 inches long. However, according to preference they can be made much shorter or longer. Devil sticks come in various colors and designs as well. Many sets have tassels on the ends of the sticks; these are often called flower sticks because the twirling makes the appearance of a flower. Flower sticks tend to be light weight and slow moving, and they are “stickier” i.e. have more grip. Despite the difference between flower sticks and devil sticks, many people choose to call all types devil sticks, which is entirely appropriate. Devil sticks can also be made into fire sticks, which have wicks at the end that can be lit on fire. Fire sticks are very pretty, but can also be very dangerous. No one under the age of 18 should engage in fire activities without parental consent. Fire safety standards must be adhered to when using fire sticks.

This is a 3 part video tutorial teaching the basics up to more advanced devil stick tricks:

<http://www.thedailyjuggle.com/juggling-sticks/devil-sticks-tutorial-part-1-the-basics>

Here is a site with written devil stick instructions including pictures:

<http://www.yoyoguy.com/info/devilstick/index2.html>

Contact Juggling

Contact Juggling is a style of object manipulation involving a single or multiple balls in contact with the body. Although it is called contact juggling, contact differs from regular juggling in that the balls are not tossed in the air; they are rolled across the body. There are four different categories of tricks in contact juggling. Butterfly transfers are tricks involving the rolling of balls on the hands. Body rolls are tricks involving the rolling of balls on the body. Isolations are tricks involving the illusion of a floating ball. Palm spinning are tricks involving the manipulation of multiple balls in the hands. There are many different tricks and illusions that can be performed with contact juggling. A contact juggler can roll, spin, and toss the ball back and forth all over the hands, fingertips, arms, and other parts of the body in beautiful and mesmerizing dance.

Choosing which ball to use is a very important part of contact juggling. There are many different options you can choose from. On the cheaper end, you can use a hockey or tennis ball that you cut open and fill with sand to give it the right weight. These are not as good for isolations. Wooden balls are also on the cheap side. They're a little small, and not as good for body rolls, but they're good for learning multiple balls. Stage balls are good for body rolling and they're highly visible so they're good for performing. They are also light so it's harder to get hurt with them. Acrylic balls are often a favorite of contact jugglers because they're extremely pretty to watch. These balls tend to be a little more expensive, and can hurt you a lot when dropped, but they will also take a lot of dropping without damage.

Take a look at this video which tells the pros and cons of different ball types:

When you begin contact juggling make sure you practice and have patience. Contact juggling is often very frustrating at first. Don't worry about sloppy moves in the beginning. Don't get discouraged. Keep practicing. After awhile muscle memory will kick in. Be aware you will be dropping the ball a lot. Try to practice over grass, carpet, or other soft surfaces so you do not get dings or nicks in your ball. If you are working with a heavy ball you may get hurt or break something. Be very aware of your surroundings.

This is a nice video introduction to basic contact juggling:

This is a great site with lots of information, tutorials, articles, and videos on contact juggling:

<http://www.contactjuggling.org>

This site also has videos and contact juggling information:

<http://www.ministryofmanipulation.com/>

Here is another site with written instructions, videos, and information:

http://patrifriedman.com/CJ/contact_juggling.html

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Clowning

Teaching Tips on Clowning

"Clowns are pegs used to hang circuses on."- P.T. Barnum

Do you like making people laugh? Is falling down or getting a pie in the face an appealing prospect to you? Then clowning might be the thing for you!

Clowns seem to be everywhere- at the circus, a parade, or birthday party; but you may have no idea how to become one. Well, no problem. Here we have accumulated many resources to help you on your journey to clownhood.

It might be helpful to define a “clown.” The simplest definition is a performer who makes people laugh. However, if that’s all there was to it, everyone would be a clown! There are many steps involved in becoming a clown.

This guide will help you on your clown path.

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Which Clown Type?

First of all, you must decide which type of clown you will be. There are several different options to choose from.

-Classic Whiteface: This is the oldest type of clown, the one people think of most often when they hear the word clown or circus. The whiteface, like the name suggests, uses white makeup to cover his entire face. Makeup is then used to highlight the features of the face. Traditionally, a one piece outfit is worn. The classic whiteface is generally at the top of the clown pecking order. He is considered the “straight man,” or the one who appears to be serious. He often orders the lower clowns to do his bidding and sets up the gag, rather than being the butt of the joke.

One variation is the Grotesque Whiteface or Comedy Whiteface, who uses makeup to exaggerate his facial features to the extreme. The comedy whiteface is a more exaggerated and whacky version than the classic whiteface clown, although he is not as outlandish as the Auguste clown. Bozo the clown is a famous example of the grotesque whiteface.

Auguste: The Auguste clown is a zany, physical comedy clown type. He can often be found wearing mismatched and oversized clothing with plenty of bright colors. There is practically no limitation to the costume of the Auguste clown. He may choose polka dots, stripes, bold colors, or any combination that enhances the personality of the clown. Unlike the whiteface, his makeup does not necessarily have the white base of color. Instead he uses a flesh tone base with splashes of color to emphasize the facial features, as well as the bulbous red nose. The Auguste is a prankster who usually has a wide variety of tricks up his sleeve (or in his various pockets). His simplicity gives him a likeable charm. He uses slapstick humor, and is often falling, getting kicked, or receiving a pie in the face. The Auguste is the least intelligent type of clown. He often has difficulty completing simple tasks, yet he can engage in complicated acrobatics. He is usually ordered around by Whiteface clown, and is the brunt of the joke.

-Character Clown: The character clown portrays a specific occupation in an exaggerated and comical way. Some typical occupations include: policeman, fireman, doctor, cowboy, bag lady, or housewife just to name a few. The character clown is a realistic looking clown. Makeup is used to exaggerate facial features or draw attention to the character's personality.

Some classic character clowns are the Tramp and Hobo characters. These clown types are distinctly American, and are thought to have originated during the Great Depression. The Tramp is typically down on his luck and depressed about his situation. The Hobo, while down on his luck, maintains a positive and optimistic attitude about his lot in life. The Tramp and Hobo share the same makeup and costume. Their makeup usually includes a dark '5 o'clock' shadow, although it is not a requirement. The mouth can be outlined, with the eyebrows and mouth either lifted to look happy (Hobo) or sad (Tramp). They both wear clothing that appears tattered, patched, and dirty. The Tramp and Hobo are the lowest clowns in the pecking order. They are always the brunt of the joke, and may be ordered around by either the Auguste or Whiteface.

-New Vaudeville: This is a modern type of clown who often does not wear makeup and engages the audience by interacting with them. Two good examples of the New Vaudeville clown are Bill Irwin and David Shiner.

Take a look at this clip of Bill Irwin to see an example of the New Vaudeville style. It's not the best quality, but Bill Irwin can always make you laugh.

Makeup

The type of clown you choose to become will be a big factor in how you do your makeup and costume.

Remember, a clown's makeup is as original as a fingerprint. It is an unwritten rule that you must not copy another clown. It's a good idea to look through pictures of other clowns to get inspiration. Then create your very own look. Clowns can even protect their makeup by sending a picture to Clowns International where their face will be painted on an egg to serve as copyright protection.

When deciding what your clown face should look like, make sure to emphasize your own facial features. The point of clown makeup is to enhance your own features, not cover them up. It's a good idea to look in the mirror and discover the natural lines and curves of your face. Use your makeup to bring out those lines. You may want to sketch a few different types of faces and makeup designs on paper, and then try out your favorites in the mirror before you decide on your final face.

Here's a good instructional video on how to put on clown makeup:

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1615760756/>

How to Apply Clown Makeup

You will need:

Hair covering/shower cap to keep hair out of face and eyes

Mirror

A few makeup brushes (2-3)

Powder puff/ sock with baby powder inside (use a clean sock, place baby powder inside, tie with a knot)

A tin of clown white grease paint

Grease paint – whichever colors you need for your face (typically red, black, flesh colors, and any other color you want)

Black eyeliner or eyebrow pencil

Tissues

Cotton swabs

Optional: Clown nose, fake eyelashes, glitter, etc

Spirit gum to adhere nose, lashes, etc

Washcloth/paper towels

Baby oil or baby shampoo to remove makeup

Pull your hair back or put your hair covering on. Make sure you wash your face and hands. If you have dry skin, put some moisturizer on first.

Apply your white or tan base first. Take care to cover every inch of your face. After the first layer is on, make sure you remember to “set” your face with the powder puff or sock. Apply the powder liberally. Setting every layer of face paint with powder is a crucial step in applying makeup because it helps keep the colors in place. Forgetting this step leads to the colors running and blending together. This creates a sloppy look you want to avoid.

Start with the lightest color, and work your way to the darker colors. Begin by using your paintbrush, dip it in the grease paint, and outline your features. Then color in your outlines with the brush or cotton swabs. Make sure you set every different colored layer.

Use the eyeliner to outline the colored in areas.

Now you need to remove the excess powder. You can do this by splashing your face with a little water. This is another very important step you don't want to forget because it keeps your makeup from fading or turning ashy. It also prevents the makeup from coming off when touched.

Lastly, you can apply your nose, lashes, glitter, etc. You may want to do this after you put on your costume.

How to Remove Clown Makeup

Taking off the makeup is another important step. You want to use the baby oil or baby shampoo on your face. Wipe it off with a damp washcloth or paper towel. It will look like a crazy mess at first, but keep at it, and the makeup will come right off. Certain colors (like reds) may stay on your face and be more difficult to remove. Simply put more baby oil or shampoo on your face and allow it to soak in. After awhile it should wipe off. If not, it will fade with time. Don't rub your face raw trying to remove it!

A Few Makeup Tips

PRACTICE! Applying clown makeup takes a long time, often upwards of half an hour. The more you practice, the quicker the process will go.

Always arrive early so you have ample time to apply your makeup before you go onstage.

Put your makeup on before you do anything else. You don't want to get grease paint all over your costume. If you must wear your costume, make sure to cover it with a large apron or smock.

Wash your hands thoroughly before and after applying makeup. You don't want to accidentally get paint on something because you forgot to wash.

ALWAYS set every layer!

Costume

Your costume should be just as unique as your makeup. If you are a traditional whiteface clown, perhaps you will choose a time-honored one piece outfit. The Auguste has many more choices, the zanier and brighter the patterns and colors choices the better. The Hobo and Tramp need to sport raggedy clothing with patches and tatters. Despite the downtrodden look of the outfit, make sure your costume is always clean. Whatever your costume choice, make sure the costume emphasizes the personality of your clown.

The first thing your audience sees when you walk out is your costume, so you want it to quickly express your personality without you having to say anything. There are plenty of clown costume patterns to choose from, but it is not necessary to follow one. It's a good idea to put a lot of thought into your design. Take a trip to a few thrift stores and see what sorts of fun fabrics and patterns you can find. Don't feel limited to articles of clothing either. Maybe that bedspread has a funky pattern, or those curtains have interesting shapes. You can create your own clothes; just make sure the material is durable. Also, make sure you choose colors and patterns that look good from far away as well as close up. Oftentimes your audience will be viewing you from a distance, so you want to make sure your outfit looks good no matter where you sit. A good way to test this is to have a friend hold up the crazy pattern while you walk to the other end of the store. If you can still see the designs clearly from far away it's a keeper.

You may choose to wear shorts or a skirt, but if you do, make sure to wear tights or long socks to cover up your bare legs. Do not show exposed skin! Several large pockets are always a good idea to have in your costume as they make storing props much easier. This also allows for the popular trick of pulling never ending objects out of your seemingly small pocket. If your costume does not originally have pockets, consider sewing a few. You can even create some fake pockets that open into a bag underneath

your costume. This allows you to carry even more props without looking like you're toting around your entire bag of tricks.

While gloves are not a requirement, many clowns choose to wear them. White is the preferred color for gloves, but anything color-coordinated with your outfit is appropriate. If your costume does include gloves, make sure to carry an extra pair or two in case of emergency. You NEVER want to wear dirty gloves. Hobo or Tramp outfits often cut the fingertips out of their gloves for their downtrodden look. Clowns that make balloon animals or juggle may want to do this as well to make the process easier.

Many clowns choose to wear a wig or hat to complete their outfit. You may use your own hair in a crazy hairstyle, but it is often easier to cover it up completely and start afresh with a wig or hat. This gives your clown more personality and helps separate the clown persona from the real you. Many clowns favor brighter colored wigs, such as reds, oranges, and yellows but that's not to say that multi-colored, blues, and purples are not widely used as well. Ultimately the choice is yours.

Clown shoes are another important aspect of your outfit. You want to make sure you find a pair that is both comfortable and durable. Clowns are on their feet a lot, so while it might seem like a good idea to buy an ill-fitting pair of shoes because they look good, after a lengthy performance your feet will not thank you for it. There are many options to choose from in clown shoes these days. You can buy large shoes that you can wear over your own shoes, but be careful as this often gets uncomfortable quickly. You can always order custom shoes off the internet that will both fit your feet and still have the oversized clown look. These tend to be a little expensive, but they are comfortable and last for a long time. You can also reuse old shoes you have lying around. Make them look sillier by spray painting them or gluing on patches. An age old trick used by many clowns is to simply buy a pair of high top sneakers; these are both brightly colored and comfortable.

Accessories are another important part of your costume. A tie or bowtie adds an extra splash of color to your outfit, while also adding to the comic effect. As ties are usually reserved for sophisticated people, a tie is an especially ironic touch. The more ridiculously patterned the tie, the better. Other accessories such as glasses, suspenders, gigantic watches, or other oversized item also add some comedy to the costume.

What kind of a clown would you be without the iconic red clown nose? Choosing which type of nose you will use is crucial. If you are a Whiteface clown you may choose not to wear a red nose. For the rest of the clowns out there, there are several ways to go in the nose category. You can buy noses online, at a costume store, or quite easily make your own. You can make or buy a nose out of many different materials, typically foam, rubber, or leather. There are advantages and disadvantages to each substance. Foam noses are light and cheap, but they are not really long-lasting. Rubber noses are also inexpensive, but they can be sweaty and make breathing difficult. Leather noses are specifically made for your face, and they last for quite awhile, but they are more expensive. The nose may be worn with an attached string, or simply held in place with putty. Many lightweight balls can be cut up and painted to become a clown nose. Some clowns use a nose made entirely of putty, and some simply paint a red nose on their face. Decide which type works best for you.

Here are some sources about how to make your own clown nose:

Foam:http://www.ehow.com/how_7861374_make-foam-clown-nose.html

Rubber:http://www.ehow.com/how_7701214_make-rubber-clown-nose.html

Leather:http://www.ehow.com/how_6462612_homemade-clown-nose.html

Who Are You?

We've talked a lot about your clown personality, especially making sure your makeup, costume, and clown type all coincide with it. But who is your clown? Now it's time to decide. By now you've figured out which type of clown you want to be. This should give you some clue as to how your clown character will act. But you don't need to feel limited to the clown categories. Feel free to mix and match. There are no concrete rules in clowning.

You need to develop your own identity as a clown. Who are you? Think of some identity traits you personally have that you want to highlight. Make a list and play around with each quality. For example, maybe you have a stutter. You can turn that into something hilarious in an act with some skillful exaggeration.

A good place to start is by writing a biography for your clown. Try writing anything from a few paragraphs to a couple of pages. No one will be reading your clown notes, so go crazy. Make up anything you like for your clown's past. The more outrageous the better! Just write whatever comes into your head. Here are a few questions to you started, but feel free to make up any others you like.

- Where were you born?
- Do you have clown parents, or did you run away to join the clowns?
- What made you want to be a clown?
- What activities does your clown enjoy?
- What are some of your favorite foods?
- What are your favorite books and television shows? (They don't have to be real.)
- Do you have any special powers? If so, how did you acquire them?

The more you know about your clown's personality, the easier it will be to think up jokes and acts that suit you. Making a biography will help cement your character in your head, and help you make decisions the way your clown would.

"A Clown cannot pretend or be artificial.

In the circus, laughter cannot be faked any more than a somersault."

~ Jerome Medrano of Cirque Medrano, Paris.

Getting Started

Now it's time to get some of the lingo down. You may hear other clowns talking about a clown "gag." First of all no, it's not a clown choking on something. A gag is a short clown routine. If it is repeated throughout the performance it is known as "running gag." A gag can be performed by one or more clowns. It can either be performed on stage, or in the audience. Have you ever been to a show where clowns walk around the audience before a performance begins? They might dust someone off with a feather duster or steal a person's glasses and try to see with them. These are both gags.

A "skit" is a short performance with a beginning, middle, and end. The audience needs to pay attention to

the entire skit to understand, unlike a gag where you might not have to see the whole thing. Because of this skits are better suited for the stage rather than at a parade or mall where people are coming and going.

If you are looking for some skits to perform there are countless books you can find that have plenty of skits all broken down to help you. Just check out your local library, or you could try finding some online. Never underestimate the power of a classic bit of clown comedy either.

Of course, many clowns choose to write their own skits, and you can too! Some things you need to keep in mind when writing a skit are:

- Who is your audience? You wouldn't write the same type of skit for a group of kindergarteners as you would for seventh graders. Make sure the skit is age appropriate and everyone will understand the jokes.
- How are you presenting? Are you going to use pantomime? Do you need props? Writing a skit without words is very different than one using words.
- What? Now you have to choose a topic. It can be anything you want! Figuring out your topic might be the hardest part. Humor comes from all sorts of different places; you can take things from everyday situations or go wild and make up crazy scenarios. You might want to make a list of everything things that make you laugh. That way when it's time to write a skit you'll already have a bunch of ideas all ready for you.

Getting the Audience Involved

As a clown, one of the most important parts of your act is the audience. You always want the audience to be paying attention to you. You can tell the audience is engaged by laughter, smiles, applause, or even groans at bad jokes. One of the worst sounds to perform to is absolute silence. Luckily if this ever happens to you, clowns have liberties that other performers do not have. If no one is clapping you can always beg for it in a silly way, you are a clown after all.

If your audience is not paying attention one of the simplest ways to bring them back is by talking to them. You can always ask them to do something that will make them participate.

One of the best ways to tell if your audience likes what you're doing is by applause! An easy way to get the kind of applause you deserve is by just teaching the audience how to clap for you. Teach them a few different rounds of applause. Demonstrate the different types for the audience. A good one to start out with is applause where they clap and slap their knees with their hands. Label this round of applause as the "knee slapper" and ask for it at different times during the act. Be silly with your different applauds. For example, tell the audience to cheer as if they were cows. You'll be greeted with the sound of mooing filling the auditorium. Get creative and make up several different applauds. Then you can mix it up and ask for different types at different times. You can even try to trip up the audience with Simon Says type games.

Another thing you can try is making different cheering sections. Split the audience in two sections and have them cheer for you one at a time. Start by telling one side to cheer and tell them their response is pitiful – you can hardly hear them at all. Move to the other side and have them try to beat the first side. Repeat this a few times. The response will get louder and louder. Kids get really involved with this, but it works with any age audience.

Another way to get audience participation is by choosing some assistant clowns. Kids love being a part of the action. Because of this, you need to be careful when choosing an assistant. If you ask for people to raise their hands, every hand will shoot up. This can cause hurt feeling for kids when you don't pick them. Instead think of some creative ways to pick audience members. Maybe start describing certain characteristics you're looking for in an assistant. Pick someone in the audience and describe them in detail. For example, I'm looking for a girl with brown hair, green eyes, and her hair in a ponytail. She's wearing a purple shirt. Once she realizes it's her, invite her up to the stage. Or you could even go down into the audience and try and pick the perfect assistant. Take some people aside saying things like "No, not this one," and "Closer, but still not right," until you find the perfect assistant.

Once you find your assistant, what should you do with them? Well, first you can start off by having them introduce themselves. Ask them questions like what's your name? Do you have any brother and sisters? Then add some silly questions like "Are you married?"

If you found some good natured volunteers you can play around with them and tease them a little. Make sure you try and feel out your volunteers though, because some people can be quite sensitive and you don't want to hurt any feelings. Plus that's not fun for anyone.

Here's a really funny video with a volunteer from the audience:

If you choose more than one volunteer, try to pick a boy and a girl. Not only does this make things fair, but it can lead to a really funny gag where you call the assistants by the wrong name each time. Your volunteers will keep trying to correct you and the audience will crack up.

Pantomime

One of the most important aspects of being a clown is exaggerating all your movements. Clowns are cartoon characters come to life, so you want everything you do to be really BIG. The larger the venue you are performing in, the bigger you want to make all your movements. You don't want your act to get lost because the audience can't see! Start practicing exaggerating all your movements, both your expressions and your physical reactions. It might be difficult at first, but the more you do it the easier it will be. Make sure you use your face to give larger than life reactions. Big responses are some of the funniest parts of clown routines.

One very important skill for a new clown to learn is pantomime, the art of performing skits without using props or words. Of course, there is no rule that says clowns cannot talk, but some of the funniest parts of clowning come from using your whole body to express yourself. It's a good idea to get used to getting your point across without using words. Sometimes pantomime is even necessary if you are performing in a larger space and not everyone will be able to hear you.

To see a great example of pantomime take a look at this video of David Shiner. It's a little long, but worth it because it's really funny. Even if you don't watch the whole thing, you'll get the point. He creates an entire story with no words at all.

Pantomime creates an illusion for the audience. If you run into an imaginary wall, the audience must see that the wall is there. First, you must make the wall visible to yourself. If you believe the wall is there, and you act as if it is, the audience will believe it too. A good pantomime creates an imaginary world that the audience can "see."

Take a look at this instructional video on how to mime the wall:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cBAD_EI-UI

One of the most important parts of pantomime is slowing down your motions so the audience can see and understand what you are doing. Lots of thought and practice needs to go into your movements. If you open an imaginary door too fast, the audience will not understand what you just did. They need time to first see what you are doing, and then translate it into your action. If your motions are too fast, there is no time for the audience's brain to process what you are doing. Going too fast is a common mistake at first. Practice in front of a mirror or record yourself to make sure your movements look real. Try and see it from another person's point of view to see if it actually looks believable. Remember, exaggeration is the key to a good pantomime!

Make sure you put in facial reactions to whatever you are doing. This makes your imaginary world seem more believable. If you are pretending to read a book, don't forget to chuckle at something funny or appear upset if there's a surprise. Little touches such as crossing your legs while reading make the action seem more believable because people often do that when reading. Pantomime should look easy, but you'll discover it is actually difficult at first. The more time and energy you put into developing your pantomime, the easier it will become. And it will all be worth it when you see the looks on the audiences' faces.

Here's another funny video using pantomime. Pay attention to how they exaggerate their movements and facial expressions. Notice how at some points when their actions become a little fast it's difficult to understand what is happening. But when their movements are clear, you understand the entire story without needing words.

If you have a chance to take a mime class, don't pass up the opportunity. It can really help to have outside help and opinions.

Practice for Pantomime

One of the most important parts of pantomime is your facial expressions. Practice exaggerated faces in front of a mirror. Especially practice faces for happy, sad, scared, angry, and surprised. Repeat them over and over in the mirror. First go in order, but then change up the routine. Make sure your expression is completely different and recognizable for each face.

Try practicing pantomiming different movements. Here are a few to try, but make up some of your own:

- Running away from someone
- Eating a sandwich
- Brushing your teeth
- Tying your shoe
- Smelling something gross
- Being hungry
- Climbing a ladder
- Finding a penny
- Taking a picture
- Seeing something far away

- Catching a firefly
- Open a door
- Blowing bubbles
- Playing golf
- Hammering a nail
- Spilling a drink
- Sweeping the floor
- Waiting for someone
- Hula hooping

Physical Comedy

A classic part of many clown acts is slapstick humor, or humor that involves absurd situations and physical comedy. A pie in the face or one clown tripping another clown are both great examples of slapstick. You don't have to include slapstick comedy in your act; you can decide whether you want to use it or not. Indeed, slapstick has been looked down upon throughout the ages as a "lower" form of humor, but when used in the correct way it can definitely bring the audience to their knees. If you are going to be a silly Auguste clown, you may want to include some slapstick in your act.

Slapstick must be used in way that makes sense in order to be appreciated. Falling for no reason will not make anyone laugh. But when the fall comes for a reason - because the boss clown is trying to retaliate - it can be hilarious. Timing is a very important aspect of slapstick because you want to establish cause and effect. For example, if one clown falls before the first clown trips him the fall makes no sense.

If you use slapstick in your routine, you're going to want to learn how to do some basic tumbling. First, start with a forward roll. You begin by squatting with your hands spread shoulder width apart on the floor. Then tuck your head so your chin touches your chest and roll forward. You should end up (once you get good at this) in a squatting position again.

The backwards roll begins in the same squatting position. This time you roll backwards over your shoulder and end back up in the squatting position. Make sure to keep your chin tucked!

After you've mastered the forward and backward rolls, you can try standing rolls. The standing forward roll is exactly the same as the one on the floor, except you begin in a standing position. The standing backward roll is the backward roll from a standing position. Always start slowly and use a mat for new tumbling moves. It's also always a good idea to have an experienced spotter when you're trying tumbling moves for the first time. Be careful!

Now that you've learned a few rolls that you can add to your physical comedy routine, it's time to learn how to fall.

Start with a forward fall. Begin in a standing position and simply fall forward. Make sure you catch yourself with your hands. You should end up in the push-up position. Do this slowly. Make sure you lower yourself to the floor, have your hands catch you and support your weight. Your legs should be straight. Don't forget to turn your head to the side. When you do this quickly, it looks like you are falling. Falling on purpose can seem pretty scary, but the key is to practice slowly on a mat. Build up to a faster time, and pretty soon you will be falling with style.

Of course you can't fall without a reason, so the next step is to learn the trip. The easiest way is to trip yourself. Catch one leg behind the other while you're walking. It will seem as if you tripped on something. To make it look more believable, snap your head back and thrust your chest forward at the same time.

Juggling

Juggling is a classic part of many clown acts. If you do not know how to juggle, here is a how to guide to get you started.

Materials- You're going to need a few things first in order to juggle.

- 3 Juggling Balls- Although any three round objects will do, specifically made juggling balls are easier to handle, and much more enjoyable to work with.
- A space to juggle- Chances are, at first anyways, that you will be dropping the balls quite a bit. Give yourself enough space when practicing so no important family items are hit or knocked over. They could potentially break!
- The desire to learn- Juggling is plenty of fun and very entertaining. Practice makes perfect, so keep practicing! You'll get the hang of it in no time!

Instructions- Let's get this started!

- Step 1- The one ball exchange

- o Imagine that you are holding a box in your hands. This box is about at eye level, and you are holding it with your palms facing upwards. You will be throwing the juggling balls to the opposite corners of the box for each throw.

- o Take one of your juggling balls in your strong hand. With a scooping motion, throw the ball from your strong hand, to the opposite top corner of the box, to your weak hand. Make an arc with the throw a few inches above your head, or at eye level, whatever is more comfortable.

- o Throw back and forth between your two hands. Each throw should be an underhand throw, and the throw should cross your body.

- Step 2-The two ball exchange

- o This step is a little bit more difficult. The general consensus is that a 3 ball juggling pattern goes in a circular motion. This is not the case. In fact, juggling follows a cascade pattern instead.

Do not follow this pattern!

Follow this pattern instead!

- o In this step, take two juggling balls, and place one in each hand. Instead of throwing the balls in a circular pattern, throw one ball under the other one.

- o Throw the ball in your strong hand (Ball 1). When Ball 1 reaches its peak and begins falling to your weak hand, throw the ball in your weak hand (Ball 2) under Ball 1. Essentially you are making a switch. Ball 1 in your strong hand goes to your weak hand, and Ball 2 in your weak hand goes to your strong hand.

- o Practice this pattern a lot. Have it down solid before continuing. Practice throwing with your strong hand first, then weak hand, and also weak hand first, then strong hand. Stop after you have thrown both balls.

- o The pattern should be strong hand throw, weak hand throw, stop. Weak hand throw, strong hand throw, stop.

o Focus on keeping your throws consistent (about at eye level, or a bit higher) with each throw and keep relaxed. Juggling is fun!

- Step 3- The three ball exchange

- o This is the hardest part of the pattern, but once you can do this, you can juggle!

- o Take two balls in your strong hand, and one in your weak hand.

- o You are going to be throwing with your strong hand first.

- o The pattern for this goes as follows:

1. Strong hand

2. Weak hand

3. Strong hand

- o You will be alternating throws with each hand.

- o Keep all throws underhand, and throw each ball underneath the last ball you threw.

- o Only throw three balls at first. Just focus on throwing for the first three times, and catching. At the end of this cycle, you should end up having two balls in your weak hand, and one in your strong hand.

- o The next step is to try to continue the pattern for as long as you can. Keep alternating between strong and weak hands, back and forth, back and forth.

Some key points to focus on:

- Juggling is very relaxed. Lean back a little bit, bend at the knees slightly, and most importantly, HAVE FUN!

- It is helpful to practice over a bed, that way if you drop, you don't have to bend over as far to pick them up!

- Stick with it! Anyone can learn how to juggle! It just takes practice!

To see this juggling guide complete with more pictures, click [here](#).

Figures were brought to you by:

Ready to learn how to juggle? (2007-2008). Retrieved September 13, 2009, from Juggling for

Beginners:<http://www.juggling-for-beginners.com/how-to-juggle.html>

For more information on juggling check out our juggling page.

Also check out the [International Jugglers' Association's \(IJA\)](#) website.

Balloon Animals

Another classic clown routine that's good to have up your clown sleeve is making balloon animals. This is a great skill to have, especially if you perform for children. Making balloon animals is a great way to draw an audience, and its fun for everyone to watch.

Before you begin you will need to buy balloons. You can't just use any old balloon though; you have to purchase specialty twistable balloons. The balloon size you want to get is called 260s. You can usually buy these at party stores. If you want to get the professional brands they are Qualatex and Betallic.

Because these are professional quality they pop less, but you do have to order them from a professional source. You will also need a hand pump to blow the balloons up. It's difficult to blow these balloons up with your mouth, and you will run out of breath really quickly. Using a pump will make the process faster and safer.

You are definitely going to pop a few balloons in the beginning, but you're still going to pop some later on when you're better at twisting. Don't worry about it. The more you practice, the less it will happen. If you break a balloon during a performance, just make a joke about it – you are a clown after all! Just make sure you pick up any broken pieces so kids don't get to them.

A few tips to keep in mind:

- Buy quality balloons.
- Don't inflate balloons too fast.
- Stay away from sharp objects.
- Keep your balloons in a cool, dry place. Don't leave them out in the sun.
- Make sure your fingernails are trimmed so you don't snag them on the balloon.
- Leave plenty of room for air in the balloon (allow for twists)

First you need to start out with some basic twists to get the hang of making balloon animals. Here are some videos with a few tips on how to twist balloons:

Twists:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KCZRJZO6f0&feature=relmfu>

Loop Twists:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiCJ7stCrjA&tracker=False&NR=1&feature=fvwp>

Tucking:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbpvRIF-IDg&feature=related>

Now you can move onto making some animals. The easiest balloon animal to start with is the dog. Here is a step by step video of how to make your first:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJJQ42fvpaY>

Next you can try making a monkey:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2QX2120eQY>

Or a sword:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Se6TbEMdqw&feature=relmfu>

Even a hat:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNgwd0oYgjo&feature=related>

There are so many different balloon animals you can make. Don't forget, if you ever want some new ones to try you can always use youtube.com; type in whatever you are looking for to find step by step videos like the ones above. In the meantime, here are a few sources where you can find lots of different balloon animals to try:

<http://www.monkeysee.com/play/10073-how-to-make-balloon-animals>

<http://www.balloon-animals.com/videos.php>

<http://www.mbd2.com/kidsstuff.htm>

Face Painting

How to Face Paint:

5 Things You Must Know Before Getting Started

By Philadelphia Tivoli

This article courtesy of <http://www.FacePaintingTips.com>. You may freely reprint this article on your website or in your newsletter provided this courtesy notice and the author name and URL remain intact.

Face Painting is becoming a popular talent with clowns who volunteer (or are hired) for events where there are a lot of children. But don't limit yourself - adults love it, too!

Learning how to face paint can be easy and lots of fun once you know how. It's a great way to have fun with the kids especially at birthday parties and special occasions.

(tiger face)

By learning how to face paint you can save yourself a fortune by not having to hire a face painter, but you're probably too busy to go out and take a face painting class right? You'd rather learn how to face paint from home and that's exactly why I wrote this article and "The Comprehensive Guide to Face Painting"

Here are 5 things that you need to know about learning how to face paint:

1. **Face Paints:** You'll of course have to buy face paints, but what kind of paint do you buy? You should only buy/use face paint that's specially made for the face and body. The most important thing to look out for when buying face paint is whether or not they comply with various authorities in your country (e.g. U.S. FDA.) within the guidelines for use on the skin. Water based face paint is the most popular and easiest to wash off – It's used by people just starting to learn how to face paint and by professional face painters.
2. **Paint Colors:** Start out with getting a palette that has black, white and the primary colors – red, blue and yellow. With these colors you can mix what ever color you need and this will give you great practice if you have just started learning how to face paint. Then once you've started painting quite often you'll start to notice that you'll need certain colors more so than others. And you can buy these specific colors in addition to black, white, red, blue and yellow, e.g., you might find that green is a popular color so instead of constantly mixing blue and yellow together to make green you might want to buy a palette of green paint.
3. **Brushes:** When I learnt how to face paint I used a thin brush for detail, a couple medium sized brushes and a large brush for larger areas. This combination of brushes worked really well for me and I recommend it to you.
4. **Hygiene:** Hygiene is extremely important in face painting and something you must be aware of when learning how to face paint. Never paint someone who has: any open cuts or sores on their face, a cold sore

or conjunctivitis or any other known infectious skin condition, a food allergy or allergic reactions to soaps, skin creams, etc without a prior skin test.

5. Get Designs: Coming up with your own designs can be difficult and coming up with popular designs that kids will definitely love is even harder that's why I created "The Comprehensive Guide to Face Painting" (Downloadable PDF) it has 50 popular step-by-step photo designs and much more need to know information about learning how to face paint. It will fast track you as a painter!

About The Author

Copyright 2006 Philadelphia Tivoli. Philadelphia teaches people how to face paint with her popular ebook "The Comprehensive Guide to Face Painting" – it has 50 fantastic step-by-step photo designs and all the information you need to know about learning how to face paint.

A few tips if you are going to be painting faces:

- Use the internet to find some cool designs.
- Make sure you practice your designs before painting them at an event.
- Bring a sheet with the designs you can paint. This way, children already know what you can do. Then you won't have to listen to complaints or have to attempt painting something that might look bad.
- Make sure to tell kids not to touch their faces for ten minutes afterward.

Magic

Not every clown uses magic in their acts, but many do and it's always a crowd pleaser. If you would like to incorporate some magic in your act – go ahead! You can get a lot of gag magic tricks at magic and joke shops. You may also want to get a book with some simple magic tricks in them. Even if you want to be a clown who always messes up his magic tricks you need to know how to do the tricks correctly in the first place! There are many professional magicians out there who work very hard to be good illusionists; it is disrespectful to them if you do not know what you are doing. Make sure you know how to perform the correct way before you display your "rotten" magic.

Props

Now that you've got some skills down, you can start thinking about what sorts of acts you want to put together. Props are a big part of most clown acts. It's hard to say exactly what props you should use; it really depends on what sorts of acts you want to do. You can turn pretty much anything into a prop as long as you make your reactions funny

Most of your props should be small enough to fit into your pockets without being seen so you can pull them out unexpectedly. You don't want them to be too heavy either, or they'll weigh you down during your act. That's not to say you can't have larger props, you can always stash those away somewhere backstage or a predetermined spot onstage. Just make sure all large props are easily transportable so you can get them from place to place easily. Props can be either homemade or bought, just use your imagination.

A few classic props you can start with:

- Rubber chicken
- Beach ball

- Whistle
- Squirting flower
- Noisemakers
- Anything comically oversized

Just about anything can be used as a prop so always keep your eyes open for objects that look funny or that fit with your clown image. Garage sales and thrift stores are great places to pick up a few odd items to use in your acts.

This is a clip of some classic European style clowning.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BE83SgmQGpc>

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Equilibristic

Teaching Tips on Equilibristics

Equilibristics is a term for any circus skill that involves balancing or maintaining equilibrium. Equilibristics entails acts in which a performer balances on a prop, as well as acts where the performer balances or spins the prop.

[Unicycle](#)

[Rolling Globe](#)

[Rola Bola](#)

[Tight Rope](#)

[Slack Wire](#)

[Hooping](#)

[Stilts](#)

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Unicycle

Unicycles are popular among circus folk and regular people alike. A unicycle is made of a single air filled tire, pedals, cranks, frame, seat post, and seat. The rider manually pedals to move the device forward and backward. Unicycles are similar to bicycles but differ in that unicycles are harder to learn, have only one wheel, and are far more difficult to balance. With bicycles the rider maintains balance by staying upright and holding onto handlebars, whereas with unicycles the rider must learn how to center their weight over the wheel to keep balance. It takes approximately 10-15 hours of practice to learn how to ride a unicycle.

When teaching or learning how to unicycle make sure you have plenty of space with smooth ground; basketball courts or indoor gymnasiums are good places. It is often helpful in the beginning to have a long wall to pedal along that you can use for support. Although it is not necessary, it may be beneficial to use wrist guards, knee pads, and a helmet to prevent injury during the learning process. NEVER use props like poles or skis to balance because they actually hinder balance and a fall onto them could cause serious injury.

Written instructions plus some more advanced tricks:

<http://www.unicycling.net/learn/index.htm>

Here are some more written instructions:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Unicycle>

International Unicycling Federation website:

<http://iufinc.org/>

Unicyclist forum:

<http://www.unicyclist.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=3>

Here is a good instructional video on how to unicycle:

Rolling Globe

The rolling globe is a large ball that a person stands upon and performs tricks. Almost all rolling globes are constructed as two halves that you connect together to complete a sphere. This creates inside walls that allow the ball to support a person's weight. The performer stands upon the sphere and may simply balance or walk. They may also execute many other tricks such as juggling, jumping, turning, going up hills or inclines, or performing any other number of circus skills or acrobatics.

When teaching or learning how to do rolling globe always have a spotter to make sure the person on the globe does not fall. Practice on a soft surface at first because not only will it hurt less if you fall, but the soft surface will cause the ball to roll slower which will make learning tricks and falling off much safer.

Great pdf with lots of instructions and tricks:

<http://community.simplycircus.com/pdf/2005-05-27-RollingGlobe.pdf>

Site with lots of rolling globe sources:

http://community.simplycircus.com/tutorials/equilibristics/rolling_globe/index.htm

Rola Bola

A rola bola (also referred to as rolla bolla, rola-bola, rolo bolo, or balance board) is simply a plank balanced on top of a cylinder. The user stands on top of the plank and proceeds to balance the board on the cylinder in a seesaw type movement without having the ends of the plank touch the ground and without falling off. Once the user can balance on the board they can perform a number of tricks including juggling, hooping, stacking several rola bolas, or even acrobatic tricks.

When teaching or learning rola bola make sure to always have a spotter. Although rola bola seems like a rather easy skill, it is still quite easy to fall off and get hurt, especially in the beginning. Never practice on concrete floors, and you may choose to invest in some wrist guards, helmet, and/or ankle braces for protection.

Here is a good site with instructions on how to learn, build your own, and do a few tricks: <http://www.wejuggle2.com/rolabola.php?Clas=learn>

Great pdf with instructions for how to learn, break downs of the different types of rola bolas, and tricks: <http://www.balance-boards.net/BBguide.pdf>

Tight Rope

Tight rope walking (or funambulism) has been a highly publicized feat of daring for many years. The art of tight rope walking consists of a person walking across a tensioned wire at great heights. High wire is another form of tight rope walking, at a greater height. There is no clear definition of when tight rope becomes high wire, but a general consensus seems to hold the boundary at above twenty feet. Tight rope acts tend to fall into two categories: “freehand” and object manipulation. The “freehand” category tends to incorporate more movement/dance in their act, while the object manipulation uses various props such as poles, umbrellas, or fans to maintain balance. Wire walkers often use other props such as juggling clubs, spinning plates, or ladders to add to the entertainment value.

Safety is extremely important when beginning to learn or teach tight rope walking. Make sure there is always a spotter present. All techniques can and should be practiced on the floor first. Many people find it helpful to draw a line in chalk on the floor to practice on. Make sure there are mats under the wire to practice with, and do not wear loose clothing because it can catch. It is best to wear soft shoes with leather sole.

Here is a great pdf with instructions and progressions in tight rope and slack wire:

[EPE Circus Instruction Chapter 3.pdf](#)

Another guide on how to walk the tight rope:

http://www.ehow.com/how_2078148_walk-tightrope.html

Here is a good instructional video for wire walking:

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1615756351/>

Slack Wire

Slack wire or slack rope is another, slightly different, form of wire walking. As the name implies, in slack wire the line is not tensioned as with tight rope, rather the tension comes from the performer and whatever props they are using. The wire moves under the weight of the walker. The degree of slack is often left up to personal preference, but as a general rule the artist’s shoulders will be in line with the top of the frame. In slack wire balance is maintained by using the hips, rather than balancing with arms as in tight rope. Slack wire artists often juggle, do handstands, or use props such as ladders in their acts.

Slack line is somewhat in between slack wire and tight rope because the wire is slightly tensioned, less than a tight rope but more than a slack wire (it only dips down a foot or so). Slack lines are often erected between trees or rocks at festivals and in universities. Slack line is considered a fun past time, but it is never (or rarely) used in performances. There are no skills or tricks that are performed on slack line that cannot be performed on either slack wire or tight rope.

Safety is extremely important when beginning to learn or teach slack wire. Make sure there is always a spotter present. All techniques can and should be practiced on the floor first. Many people find it helpful

to draw a line in chalk on the floor to practice on. Make sure there are mats under the wire to practice with, and do not wear loose clothing because it can catch. It is best to wear soft shoes with leather sole.

Here is a great pdf with instructions and progressions in tight rope and slack wire:

[EPE Circus Instruction Chapter 3.pdf](#)

This site has some good written instructions and tips on slack wire:

http://community.simplycircus.com/tutorials/equilibristics/slack_wire_notes.htm

Hooping

Hooping is a style of dance performed with a large circular hoop. Hooping is a fun and beautiful activity that is often referred to as Hoop Dancing. Other people engage in hooping as a form of cardio exercise. Hooping is often confused with the hula hooping fad from 1950's, but modern hooping is much different. Hooping uses a much larger and heavier hoop than the plastic children's toy. The hoop is generally between 40-44 inches in diameter. This larger, heavier size allows the hoops to move slower around the body, which makes it easier to keep going. Hoops are usually made from **polyurethane** piping and decorated with colorful or sparkly tape. Hoopers often make their own hoops with piping found at the hardware store and special tape. If you're interested in making your own hoop, take a look at our make your own equipment page. Hoops can also be made out of lightweight **aluminum** or wood for a faster rotation. The faster hoop can be used for more tricks, but requires more skill from the hooper.

LED hoops are a safer version of a light up hoop. The LED hoop lights up with bright colors, but offers no danger from being burned. LED hoops are extremely pretty to watch. They are battery operated, so they are easy to use.

Fire hoops are hoops that can be lit on fire from various spokes sticking out from the hoop. Fire hooping is a very gorgeous, but dangerous activity. Make sure you engage in proper fire training before trying a fire hoop. Children under 18 must have written parental consent before engaging in fire hoops.

Here is an introductory video to hooping:

This is the site with several complete playlist of how to hoop videos, including lots of tricks:

<http://www.ehow.com/search.html?q=hula+hoop&t=video>

Here are some videos with some basic tricks:

Move hoop up your body without hands:

Various tricks:

This is a great written guide teaching how to hoop:

<http://www.hooping.org/2003/08/how-to-hula-hoop>

Here is a website that has lots of how to hoop videos:

<http://safiredance.wordpress.com/tag/tutorial/>

These websites provides a community and forum for hoopers:

<http://www.hooping.org/>

<http://www.hoopcity.ca/main>

Stilts

Stilts are poles a person stands upon to stand and walk a distance above the ground. The supreme height of stilt walkers always turns heads. Many stilt walkers perform other tricks as well, such as juggling, magic, balloon animals, or even teaching others to walk on stilts.

There are several different types of stilts. **Hand-held stilts** are often children's toys. They consist of two long poles, with a place for the feet. The wearer grips onto the poles with the hands and puts the feet on foot plates. These do not strap onto the feet. **Peg stilts** are a very popular stilt type for performers and dancers. These stilts are strapped on at the foot and shin or knee. These stilts allow the performer to quickly walk, turn, or dance. With this type of stilt the wearer must constantly be in motion in order to avoid falling. Dry Wall stilts are stilts commonly used in construction (as the name implies). These stilts are strapped at the feet. They are heavier than peg stilts which allows for slower and safer walking. With these stilts the stilt walker may stand still without falling. This makes them both useful and very safe. However, they may create a false sense of balance if you move to another stilt type. **Spring stilts** or **Jumping stilts** are stilts designed for extreme sports. They are spring loaded stilts that allow the wearer to leap up to 9 feet in the air and run up to 20 mph. These stilts are strapped at the foot and shin.

Here is a video showing how to begin stilt walking:

A video about safety while stilt walking:

This is a link to a website with a whole playlist of how to stilt walk and how to make stilts:

http://www.ehow.com/video_4463358_basics-walking-stilts.html

Here is a written guide for how to stilt walk:

<http://www.afterdarkperformers.com/stiltwalkersarticle.html>

Plate Spinning

Plate spinning is a manipulation skill that involves spinning a plate upon a stick without the plate falling off. The plates are generally made of plastic with a dip in the center that the stick rests in. The sticks are most often of wood, although there are plastic sticks available as well. Plate spinning is not difficult, however many people have problems learning how to make the plate spin. Once the plate is spinning the spin will last between 20-30 seconds, which leaves time for a few tricks per spin. There are many tricks that can be done with spinning plates including spinning multiple plates, throwing and catching the plate, and balancing the spinning plates on various body parts.

These sites have good written instructions:

<http://www.teachcircus.com/plates.html>

<http://www.platespinning.com/learn/>

Here is a site with plate spinning tricks:

<http://www.juggling.org/help/circus-arts/plate-spinning/>

Jessica N Lipscomb 2011

Acrobalance

Acrobalance

This page is designed to shed light on the topic of Acrobalance, as well as provide information on the different types, and additional links for further learning.

[Acrobalance](#)

[Partner yoga](#)

[Acrobatic Gymnastics](#)

Acrobalance

Acrobalance involves the physical act of sharing weight and balancing between two or more people. Acro (as it is often referred to) consists of a base, flier, and spotter. The **base** is someone who stays in contact with the ground and supports the weight of the flier. Often the base is larger than the flier, although it not necessary, it often proves easier. The base must be stable and grounded to support their flier. The base can be in any number of stable positions including laying on the ground, standing, kneeling, and crouching. They may balance the flier on their hands, knees, feet, back, thighs, or any number of combinations. The **flier** is the person on top who “flies” through the air. They can be moved in a variety of interesting positions. The flier is entirely supported by the base, and must trust that their base will not drop them. They need trust and core strength. The **spotter** is essential at the beginning as they are the person who makes sure everyone is safe. It is the spotter’s job to ensure the flier does not fall during the process. They

may also help make sure the base and flier are in the correct position and make modifications or suggestions.

Acro video:

Acrobalance is a combination of adagio and hand balancing. Adagio involves various transitions between stationary positions with a base and a flier. Adagio often involves partner lifts and catches. Usually the partners consist of a man and woman, but any other type of pairing man/man, female/female, trio, or multiple partners is acceptable, if not as common. Hand balancing is the art of performing acrobatic maneuvers entirely supported by your hands. In hand balancing a strong base supports the flier in handstands and various other acrobatic poses. Hand balancing may also be performed solo. Acrobalance is performed professionally by circus artists, acrobats, gymnasts, and acro dancers. It is also practiced as a hobby by many people, particularly university circus groups.

Here is an Acrobalance Wiki. It has all sorts of information including different grips, poses, and tricks for various numbers of people:

http://acrobalance.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

Directions for performing some common tricks:

http://faculty.concordia.edu/tom_pate/stunts.htm

This site has links to plenty of different Acro sites:

<http://community.simplicircus.com/tutorials/acrobatics/acrobalance.htm>

Partner Yoga

Partner Yoga combines acrobalance, yoga, and thai massage. It is a practice that incorporates playfulness, trust, and connection. Partner yoga can take place in formal classes or informal “jam” sessions that involve creativity, sharing, and new ideas. Partner yoga sessions often include a circle ceremony, asana warm-up, partner flow, inversions, partner acrobatics, flying, and thai massage. There are a variety of types of yoga that integrate partner work. These include Acroyoga.com (Canada) Acroyoga.org (USA) and CircusYoga, which also integrates circus techniques and creative play.

Here are the two Acroyoga websites. Take a look at the gallery of pictures for ideas:

<http://www.acroyoga.com/>(Canada)

<http://www.acroyoga.org/>(USA)

Check out Acroyoga’s youtube channel for more ideas:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/AcroYoga>

CircusYoga takes Partner yoga a step further and incorporates circus skills in their practice. Here is the official CircusYoga website. Take a look at the gallery of pictures for ideas:

<http://www.circusyoga.com>

Acrobatic Gymnastics

Acrobatic gymnastics is a sport that combines acrobalance, gymnastics, and dance in a highly competitive environment. Acts incorporate balance, flips, and dance performed to music. There are five categories for competition: women's pairs, men's pairs, mixed pairs (a male base and a female flier), women's groups (three females), and men's groups/quad (four males). There are three different routines that must be performed in a competition. Balance showcases the acrobat's strength, stamina, and agility as they build and hold difficult skills. Dynamic demonstrates the acrobats strength and power and is characterized by throws, catches, flights, rotation, and tumbling. Combined shows the diversity of both the static skills in balance and the flight skills of balance along with personal flair.

Acrobatic gymnastics official homepage:

<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/pages/acro/pages/index.html>

Video from the 2009 Acrobatic Gymnastics Championship:

Here is a guide for gyms who want to start their own Acrobatic Gymnastics Program:

<http://issuu.com/usagymnastics/docs/acrowebbrochurefinal?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Fflight%2Flayout.xml&showFlipBtn=true>

Here are some coaching training videos for Acrobatic Gymnastics:

<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/pages/acro/video/>