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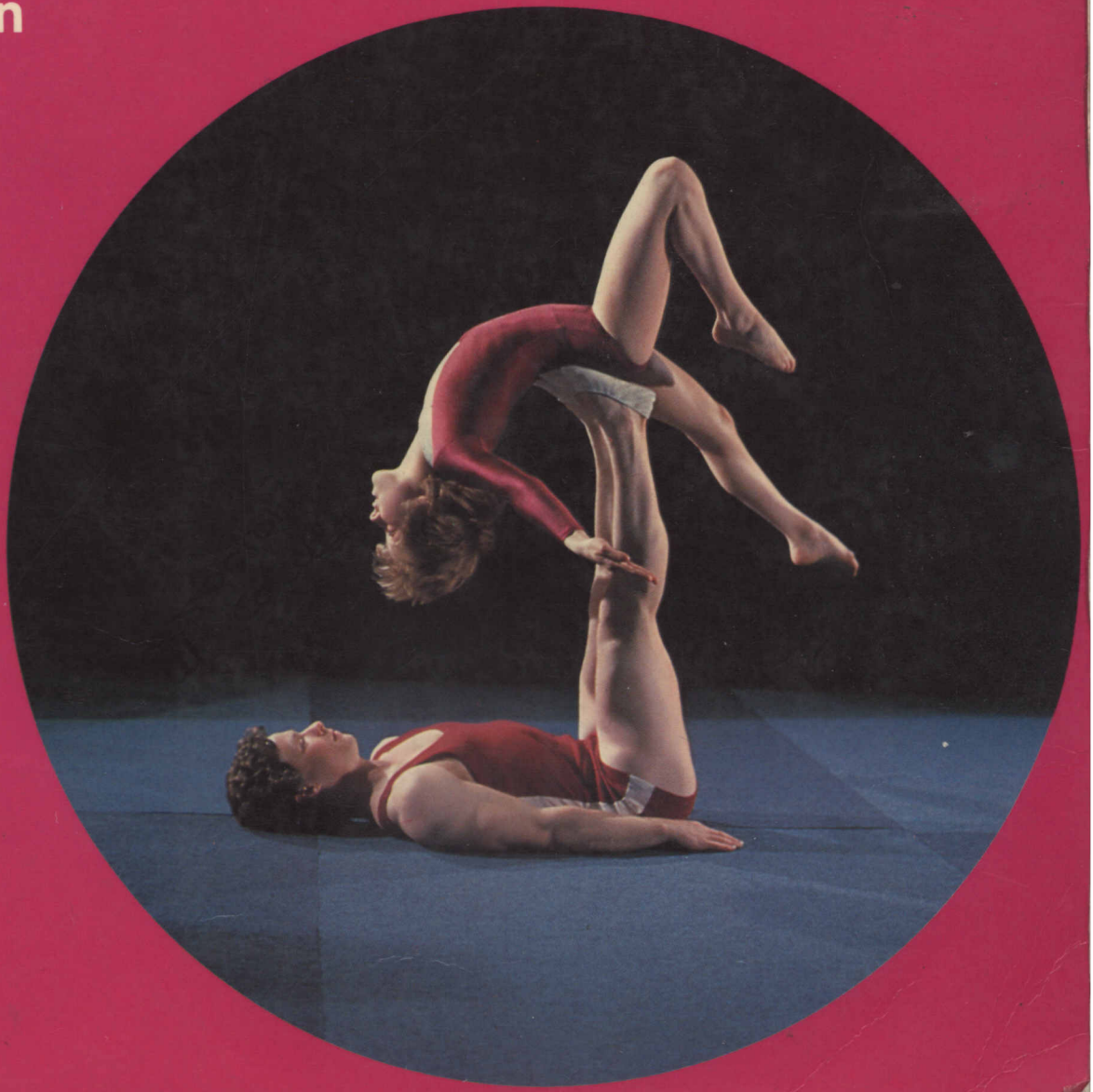
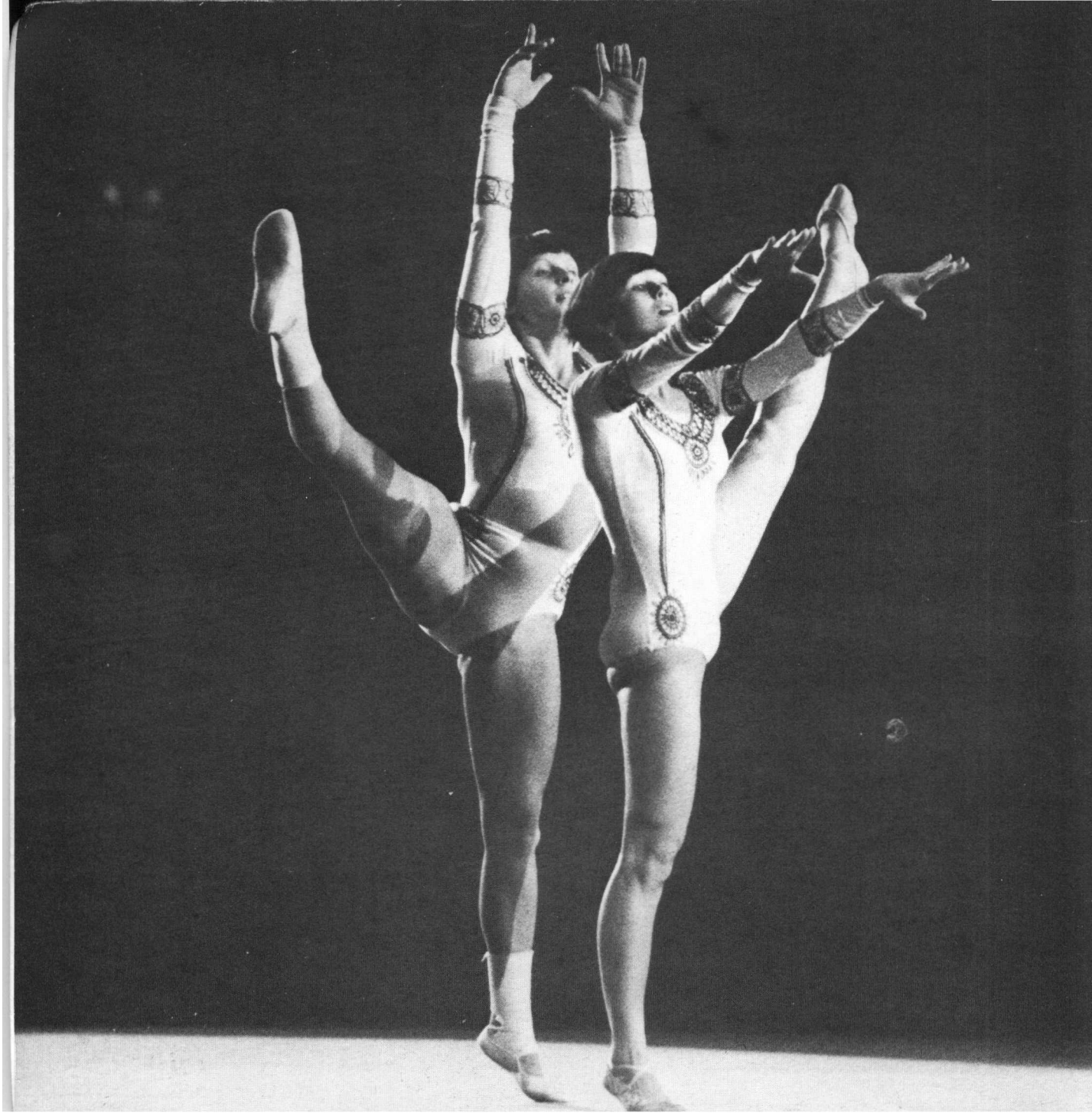
sports acrobatics

jill coulton





JILL COULTON

Sports Acrobatics

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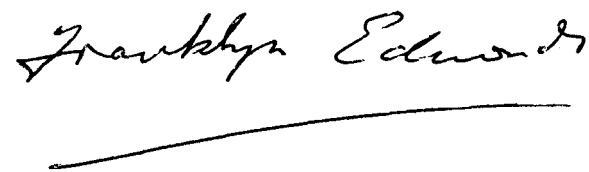
Foreword

Although acrobatics has its roots in antiquity, it is only in recent years that a competitive sport has been devised and a set of rules formulated to direct and control.it. The sport has, however, been fortunate in that many gymnastic coaches soon adapted to the demands of the new sport, and of this number, TillCoulton quickly emerged as a leading figure.

That Till Coulton has proved such a force in the development of Sports Acrobatics is not surprising. Not only is she a former Olympic gymnast but so is her mother - consequently Tillwas virtually weaned on Gymnastics. It would be quite misleading and unfair, however, to give an impression of her as a competent coach solely by virtue of her background and experience. Like ballet, Sports Acrobatics requires imagination and inventiveness as well as thorough technical knowledge; Till's success in the international field has been due to her possession of these attributes and to her absolute dedication.

For these reasons, prior to receiving the text, I readily undertook to write a foreword to her book. Having now read the proofs, I find my confidence more than justified and I can thoroughly recommend it to those seeking a worthwhile and authoratitive book on Sports Acrobatics. The author deals with her subject with that clarity of description and devotion to detail characteristic of an experienced and dedicated coach. In addition, the illustrations are expertly done and admirably support and amplify the text. Mrs. Coulton is to be congratulated on a competent, informative and most attractive work.



President
British Amateur Gymnastics Association

1 Introduction

Sports acrobatics is an exciting sport requiring new dimensions in strength and mobility from its participants, although it is very closely related to gymnastics and the basic preparation is almost identical. From the spectator's point of view it is thrilling, and as there is so much variation in the sport it lends itself to almost any situation in any school or club. Whether you have a male, female or mixed club there will be a section or sections in sports acrobatics in which you can participate.

Sports acrobatics is divided into two main areas:

1 Pair and group work which involves Women's Pairs, Men's Pairs, Mixed Pairs, Women's Trio and Men's Group (4).

2 Tumbling which involves both men and women.

Each group has its own grades of difficulty and is judged independently of the other sections, although in the early stages of development the preparation is similar.

The pair and group work is divided into two types of skill; the first excercise called 'balance' which is self-explanatory and consists of static elements which are held for a specified time, and the second excercise called 'tempo' which as its name implies is made up of faster elements of a more dynamic nature which are not held. Tumbling is also divided into two main categories, each competitor performing two runs, the first containing somersaults of a tucked, piked or straight nature, whilst the second contains twisting somersaults.

As in all sport the way to the top of the ladder is from the bottom rung, perfecting each stage before moving on to the next. This book aims to show the would-be participant in sports acrobatics how to prepare for the sport and a little of what is required at a more advanced level when it becomes desirable to specialise in one of the seven sections.

Sports acrobatics can be enjoyed by ev.eryone, from the individual, pair or group wishing to pursue the competitive side to eventual international representation, to the school or club using the sport as a method of involving people in a physical activity. At the same time it has great social value as it offers the opportunity to work with other people as well as providing schools and clubs with exciting material for display work.

2 Equipment

PAIR AND GROUP WORK

Mats

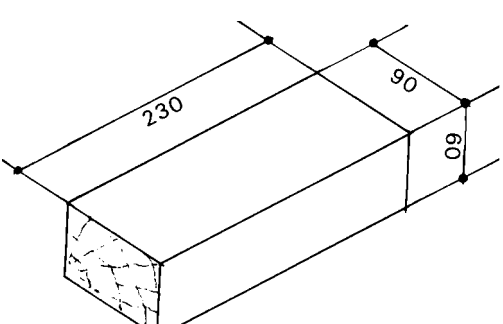
The main requirement is plenty of mats, if possible of a reasonable thickness, particularly in the later stages of development when tempo elements require the upper partner to perform many repetitive landing skills. A pit or safety mats will take the strain when learning new elements, but when the movement is eventually transferred to the floor adequate matting should be provided so that many repeats of the skill can be attempted with complete confidence and safety.

Use of general gymnastic equipment

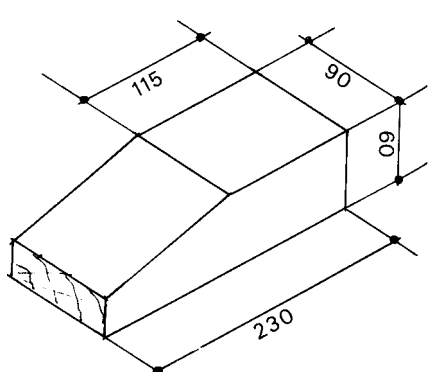
For breaking down skills and assisting in support methods all gymnastic equipment from wall bars, benches, medicine balls and vaulting boxes to balancing beams, parallel bars and vaulting horses can be adapted to the needs of this sport.

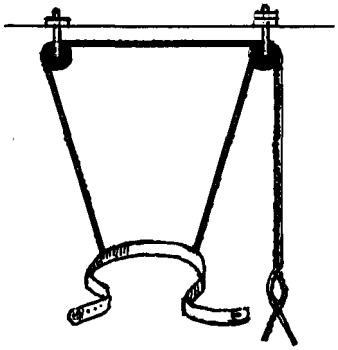
Balancing blocks

Small wooden blocks to give the gymnast the feeling of balancing off the floor and to reduce the balancing area can be simply made. These can be used for practice both in the gymnasium and in the home.



The *block* on the right is the same size as the other, *but* the *angle* gives a better *simulation* of the *position* of the fingers *in* the *actual balance*





Overhead rigs and twisting belts

Overhead rigs and twisting belts are not only extremely valuable as a training aid because they allow the coach to see the skill, but are also an important safety factor when learning the more difficult skills.

Trampolines and trampettes

Trampolines and trampettes are a valuable training aid as they allow a situation where the performer has more time available due to the height of the movement to consider and improve technique, and also more repetitions are possible without overtiring, causing much less strain on ankles and knees. They must, however, be used under correct and constant supervision.

12m floor area

In the later stages of development, particularly when specialisation in pairs and groups occurs, a 12m floor area will be necessary on which to plan the competitive routine.

Chalk

Chalk in the form of light magnesium carbonate, powder or block, will prevent slipping when hand to hand or hand to foot contact is made.

Music

Throughout the sport from beginner to advanced performer music plays a very important part and it is an advantage to have a cassette player in the gymnasium at all times.

TUMBLING

Ordinary mats of a reasonable thickness and of sufficient length to allow continuity will be quite adequate to learn the basics of tumbling. However, for advanced competitive tumbling a specially constructed run is required. which gives assistance to the performer in a similar way to a gymnast using a springboard. This specially constructed run enables the tumbler to increase his momentum and therefore gain height in the skills, enabling more difficult elements to be performed in a continuous manner. The length of this run is 30m in addition to which there is an allocation of lOm for the preparation run and take-off. A springboard may be used for take-off at all levels of tumbling.

DRESS

Competitive dress to conform to the regulations laid down by the International Federation of Sports Acrobatics is as follows:

Women and girls	Leotard
Men and boys	Leotard or T-shirt and gymnastic shorts, trousers or cat suit

In pair and group events dress between each pair and group must be identical. Shoes are optional but again each pair or group must be identical. Mixed pair dress must be complementary.

Every effort should be made by performers to present themselves well at all training sessions, demonstrations and competitions. Discipline in this direction will not only give a good impression to coaches, judges and audiences but give a feeling of well-being and so improve performance.

3

Preparation for Sports Acrobatics

The importance of correct preparation cannot be emphasised too strongly. A performer who is correctly and patiently prepared in all the different aspects will progress very quickly, but this will not happen if the preparation is rushed and the performer is asked to attempt difficult skills too early. No skill is considered difficult if the correct learning procedure is followed, and although it may take longer to achieve the more advanced skills by this method the performer will benefit as he or she will be successful for a much longer period of time, for sound preparation will sustain the gymnast throughout his or her career.

In order to achieve success coaches should not make their selection of pairs too early, but should use their ingenuity and imagination to make classes interesting and varied, combining the different aspects of preparation. If the following preparation is done over a period of time on the basis of constantly changing partners then the outcome should be a group of well-prepared performers able to work with anyone. This will give the coach the opportunity to study the four main aspects of pairing: size, weight, ability and compatability.

The extensive preparation required is divided into the following areas, and as it is not possible to cover all these items thoroughly in one training session, coaches should have a lesson plan which allows every aspect to be covered over a given period, depending on the amount of training time. Suggested training programmes are given on pp. 13-14.

WARM-UP Walking, running, skipping, jumping Team games	**BODY PREPARATION** Gentle exercises to supple all body parts Minor strengthening Ballet exercises	**BODY TIGHTNESS** Exercises to tighten seat, stomach and leg muscles Body control and discipline Group exercises for tightening
PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS Using boxes, benches, beams etc., for individual preparation for more advanced elements	**EXTENSIVE SUPPLING** Vigorous exercises with emphasis on back, legs and shoulders; suppling in groups	**SYNCHRONISATION** Learning to link movements together to music and with a partner or group in formation
BASIC BALANCING Balance supports Balances graded to individual ability	BASIC TEMPO Orientation Awareness in flight Co-ordination with a partner Basic tempo elements graded to ability	**INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS** Handstands Cartwheels Splits Forward and backward bends Handsprings Back flips
TUMBLING Learning to move at speed in a straight line Handsprings, round-off back flips, somersaults in tempo Joining elements together	**SET AND VOLUNTARY** Sequences Amalgamation of everything learned into a set or voluntary Display work	**STRENGTHENING** Gradual building of strength to individual requirements This session also includes winding-down process-end of training

In planning coaching sessions it is important to structure the work in a logical and progressive way. The outline shown is intended as a guide to coaches and teachers in planning throughout the year.

COACHING FRAMEWORK (n-2hr session)

Part 1

i *Basic* preparation
- a Warm-up
- b Body preparation
- c Body tightness
- d Extensive suppling

ii Synchronisation
- a Linking movements together
- b Working with a partner
- c Working to music either with a partner or as a class

Hi *Class* activity

Progressive elements leading to partner work taught either as a class or in groups

Part 2

i Group work
- a Balance
- b Tempo
- c Individual elements
- d Tumbling

ii Sequence *building*
- a Formation of routines-sets and voluntaries
- b Display work

Hi Strength training

While no specific time plan is indicated for the different sections, in the beginning an equal division of time should be allocated to each of Part 1 and Part 2. As the level of performance and experience rises the coach should graduate towards a *40/60* per cent division of time between Part 1 and Part 2. The coach should only make this alteration when the gymnasts can display a reasonable level of proficiency in terms of tightness, body awareness and general gymnastic competence.

While the suggested framework contains the essential elements of a coaching session, the time plan indicated must be flexible. Coaches should attempt to teach all the sections in Part 1 every session. In Part 2, apart from the essential strengthening work which must be done every session, the

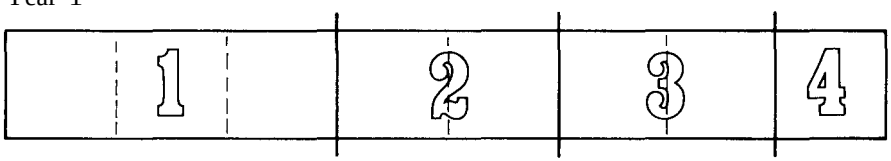
coach will be required to build up the balance tempo, individual elements, tumbling and basic sequence building thoroughly before embarking on the formation of full routines.

Display work, however, can be introduced fairly early to the class as it extends the synchronisation and creates an awareness of working with others which is essential to the development of the sport. The emphasis and the time spent on individual sections will alter depending on the specific objectives of the coach at any particular time; consequently the work should be tackled session by session according to a pre-determined scheme laid out for the entire year.

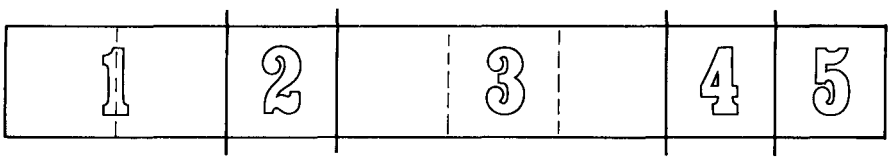
In the early stages, and particularly during the first year of involvement in the sport, the emphasis in training should centre on the preparation which will lay the foundation of sound technique. An indication of the time to be spent on each phase of training over a three-year period is shown below.

Training phases

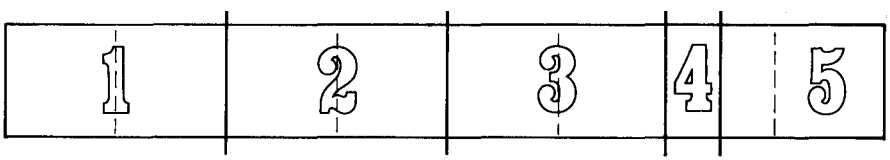
Year 1



Year 2



Year 3



1 Preparation for the sport
2 Introduction of new skills
3 Sequence building and routine preparation
4 Club competition and display work
5 Inter-club, regional and national competitions

Although the time allocation to the different training phases varies from year to year it should be realised that the intensity and difficulty of the work should increase progressively.

After year 1 the coach should also ensure that every individual and pair should have a simple routine established which can be performed in competition or display at all times. Even when new routines are being devised performers should not be allowed to discard existing routines until the new routine is ready for presentation.

In the diagram showing the phases of training no account has been taken of holidays. Coaches should arrange training phases to take account of normal holidays. Although holidays are vitally important to everyone's well-being, coaches should try to ensure that gymnasts retain their physical readiness during such breaks, so that when training is resumed progress is not set back. In this connection it can be useful to keep a personal 'diary' recording day-to-day progress during training and holiday times. Coaches should check these regularly and make up a log book containing 'profiles' of the gymnasts in their club to assist in the planning of future training.

Warm-up

Warm-up should not be confused with body preparation. The two headings should be separated in the minds of gymnast and coach and if approached with the correct attitude of mind will lead to perfection and eventual success. Too often body preparation is treated as something to be finished as quickly as possible so that difficult skills can be attempted, with gymnasts realising too late the importance attached to this aspect. World Champions do not have to be asked to stretch their legs or feet and tighten their bodies to ensure that a skill will be successful with minimum loss of marks-it is an automatic reaction born of early training, making the learning of difficult skills much easier, safer and more successful.

Team games are a good method of warming-up since they not only create a competitive spirit within the class but also help to produce awareness for tempo elements by creating a situation where individuals are conscious of the position they are in whilst moving at speed and avoiding other members of the class. Alternatively, walking, running, jumping or skipping will warm the body and enable gentle stretching to start.

No other aspect of the preparation should be attempted until after completion of the warm-up. Attempts at vigorous leg swings and acrobatic skills will result in pulled or torn muscles. Care in avoiding injuries is particularly vital to sports acrobatics pair or group work, because in becoming injured through carelessness you are preventing your partner or

group from participating in full training, and maybe even preventing entry to a competition. Complete body fitness should therefore be of first and foremost importance. This includes correct, sensible warm-up and body preparation at every stage of training, whatever standard is achieved.

Body Preparation

All parts of the body must be exercised. This should be done gently at first and then more vigorously, particularly in the case of ankles, hips, back and shoulders in order to develop joint mobility and stretch the appropriate tendons. Always remember, however, that the more vigorous suppling exercises should not be attempted until the body is thoroughly warm, and then the part of the body being exercised should be coaxed, never forced.

Preparation for beginners should be supervised by the coach as the object will be defeated if all movements are not carried to their furthest point. If full extension is not achieved in the preparatory exercises performers will not reach the stage when this becomes automatic, which alleviates problems when attempting the more difficult skills.

As music is a major factor in the sport it is helpful to use it for preparatory exercises. It lays the foundations for routines, and because it is much easier to achieve complete extension to the rhythm of music, more progress can be made in a shorter time.

If serious competitive involvement is intended, records of suppling and strengthening should be kept by the individual performer, since these give the coach a complete picture of progress and set a target to work for which gives a certain amount of competitive spirit.

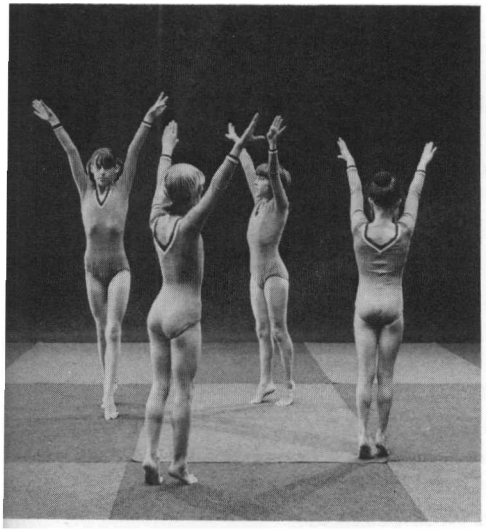
BODY PREPARATION FOR BEGINNERS

In a class for total beginners, particularly very young people who will not have the ability to work in pairs immediately, simple exercises must be taught. This will gradually establish co-ordination and body discipline, gently building up the strength and tightness for pair work.

Isolating and exercising each part of the body will help the beginner to relate to requests to 'bend the knees' or 'straighten the back'. A coach must be sure that a gymnast understands what is being asked of him or her, and therefore it is essential to establish a common language. If a gymnast does not respond to an instruction, it may be because it is being incorrectly interpreted. A great deal can be done to establish this type of communication with very young gymnasts by trying to find out what the gymnast

feels he or she is being asked to do and if this coincides with what they are actually being asked to do. A simple question and answer technique is helpful. Some gymnasts absorb technique, others need to have the point put to them in more simple terms. A good coach who understands gymnasts will get satisfactory results from either situation.

BASIC EXERCISES WHICH CAN BE TAUGHT TO A LARGE GROUP



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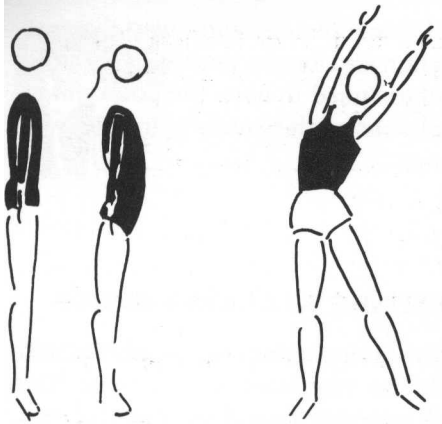
The number of repetitions of any exercise is dependent on the ability and understanding of the class and should be regulated accordingly. The number of repetitions suggested for each exercise should be regarded as a minimum to ensure a reasonable effect. Minimum repetitions, both left and right, are shown in brackets after each exercise.

1 Learn to stand correctly, head erect, stomach and seat tucked in, back straight, shoulders relaxed, not hunched.
2 Learn to walk naturally with good posture.
3 Walk on toes, both arms stretched upwards, stomach pulled in, legs tight. A commom fault when stretching up, particularly in gymnasts with a very supple back is for the back to hollow. It is important to correct this early and learn that there are times when the back has to be hollow and when it has to be straight. Gymnasts must distinguish between the two and be prepared to respond accordingly.
4 Standing feet astride, make full circles with the head to left and right, keeping the rest of the body still (x 8).
5 Standing feet astride, lift and lower shoulders, arms downward. Circle shoulders separately, then both together (x 8).
6 Standing feet together, swing arms alternately forward and backward, commencing with a small swing and increasing height of forward arm until the arms are swinging as far upwards and backwards as possible. Eight swings with each arm to complete movement (x 4).
7 Standing feet astride, circle upper body from waistto both left and right (x 4).
8 Make small circles with hands to left and right to exercise wrists. Keep arms still (x 8).
9 Stretch feet and strengthen ankles by jumping into the air, concentrating on driving from the feet to obtain height (x 16).
10 Jump feet astride and back together, then forwards or backwards and together again (x 16).
11 Jump forward and backward from two feet to one foot (x 16).



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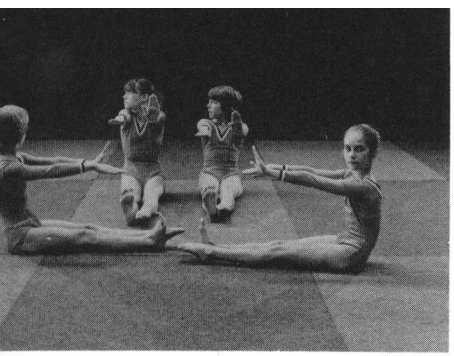

12 Heel bounces-press toes firmly into floor, raise heels. Return heels to floor and repeat rhythmically (x 16).

13 Stretching sideways, left and right, arms vertical. Do not twist or lean forward (x 8).

14 Sit on floor, legs and feet stretched forward. Turn feet up as far as possible, then stretch down as far as possible (x 16).

15 As no. 14 but alternate movements of feet so that one is turned up, the other down. This is an introduction to co-ordination which can be further complicated by introducing opposite movements of hands or turning head to left and right (x 16).

16 Sit on floor, legs stretched forward. Bend and stretch knees, alternating right and left leg. Endeavour to get heel of bent leg as close to seat as possible.
Do the same exercise keeping legs together (x 16).

17 Lie on the floor, lift one leg straight to vertical and lower. Repeat, changing legs (x 16). Do the same exercise slowly, keeping legs together (x 4).

18 Lie on the floor. Sit up quickly, touch knees, toes, knees and lie down. Do this as quickly as possible (x 20).

19 Sit on floor, legs stretched forward. Keeping hips facing forward, move one leg sideways as far as possible, return to original position. Repeat to left and right (x 8).

20 Sit on floor, legs astride. Lift both arms to vertical, bend body over left leg keeping a tight position so that the arms reach over to the left foot and the chest is on the left knee, head up (x 4).
Do a similar exercise with legs together, lifting both arms to vertical and stretching body over legs, chest on knees (x 8).

21 In front-lying position on floor, arms bent, hands flat on floor on either side of chest, press hands on floor and straightening arms arch the upper body backwards, keeping the hips on the floor (x 4).

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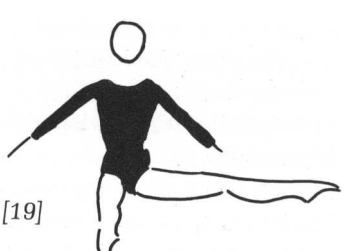

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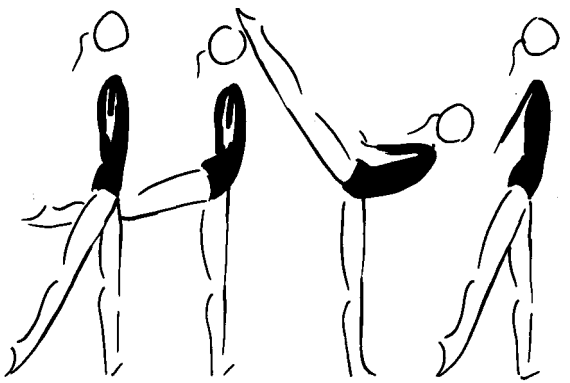
22 Lie on the floor, knees bent. hands overhead flat on the floor. Taking the weight on the hands and feet push to a bridge position. Push shoulders over hands and keep feet flat on the floor (x 4).

23 (Tuck' position). Sit on the floor. knees bent. feet flat. Clasping legs. roll backwards in a tucked position and return to sitting. Repeat, attempting to come to standing on two feet.

Do the same exercise from standing, arms vertical, taking care to sit down close to the heels and keep the weight forward over the knees. Vary the methods of coming to stand in readiness for the many rolls used as choreographic elements. e.g. come to stand on one leg. the other stretched forward or backward; or roll to stand on one leg and do anyone-legged balance (x 4).

24 One-legged balances: transfer the weight to one leg and balance with free leg forward. backward. sideways or in full arabesque (x 2).

25 Standing with one foot in front of the other. Half and full turns on toes of both feet. Half and full turns stepping and turning on one foot (x 4).



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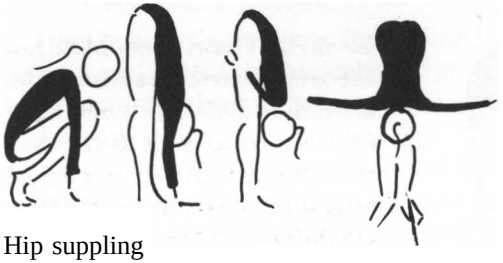
The following exercises are of a more specialised nature aimed at producing the exceptional mobility in the hips. shoulders and back required in the more advanced elements of the support.

Shoulder and hip suppling

Stand erect, feet apart. Reach as far forward as possible. touching the floor with the fingertips, then arms passing between the feet as far backwards as possible to touch the floor. Stand erect. arms upward. lock thumbs together and keeping arms straight press shoulders backwards behind head twice. Perform the exercise rhythmically to a count of four (x 8).



Hip suppling

Bend knees to a crouch position. hands flat on floor in front of feet. Straighten knees, keeping hands flat on floor, and place head on knees. Bend knees and repeat exercise three times. On the last time hold arms sideways, holding pike position with head on knees (x 4).

[1}

Legsuppling

1 Stand with feet apart and turned out. Turning body slightly to the right, bend right knee to lunge position and straighten four times. Repeat on left side. Move right foot further sideways and repeat exercise. Continue in this manner moving the right foot further sideways until a deep lunge position is reached. (Note that the body weight is held over the bent knee and the straight leg is extended as far backwards as possible. Feet must remain turned outwards.) (x 1).

2 In full lunge position, body facing forward, keep foot of bent knee flat on floor. Bounce up and down endeavouring to push straight leg as far sideways as possible, keeping body weight over bent knee. Repeat left and right (x 4).

3 Sit on the floor holding insteps together. Keeping the movement continuous bounce knees downwards, attempting to touch floor with knees (x 16).

4 Lie on the floor, holding legs astride. Keeping legs straight, bounce up and down, attempting to touch floor with feet (x 16).

5a Sit on floor, legs stretched forward. Roll backwards, taking the legs over the head to touch the floor. Return to sitting, legs astride, arms stretched upwards. Reach forward as far as possible with head lifted and back flat, attempting to lie completely flat on the floor (x 4).

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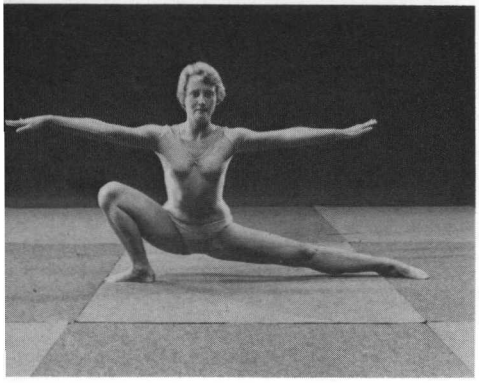

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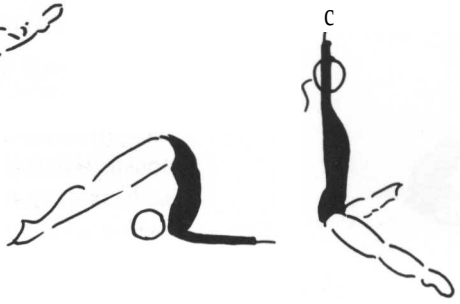

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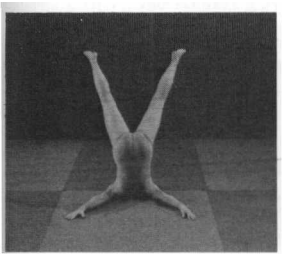
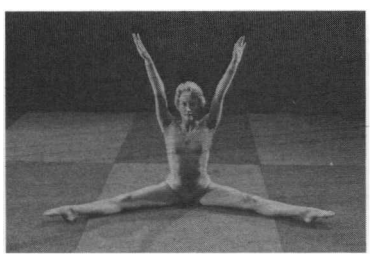
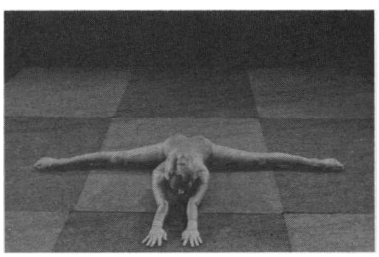
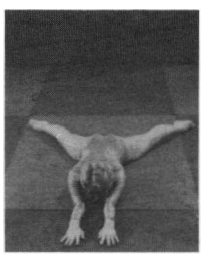
b Do the same exercise with the legs together (x 4).
c Do the same exercise but make a turn into splits after the roll to sitting astride. Repeat turning the opposite way into splits (x 4).
d Do the same exercise to astride sitting and reach forward allowing the legs to move through side splits to join together behind. Push backwards to kneeling position, forward roll (page 55) to straddle and repeat the exercise (x 4).

[sd]

6 Holding a barre or beam swing the legs freely in all directions (x 8).


Back and *shoulders*

Lie on the floor, push to bridge position and pressing the heels firmly into the floor with a rocking movement push the shoulders beyond the hands. (If either the shoulders or the back, or both, are very stiff do the bridge position with the aid of a partner. Push to bridge with hands on ankles of partner, who will then assist by pulling the shoulders over the hands.) (x 4).

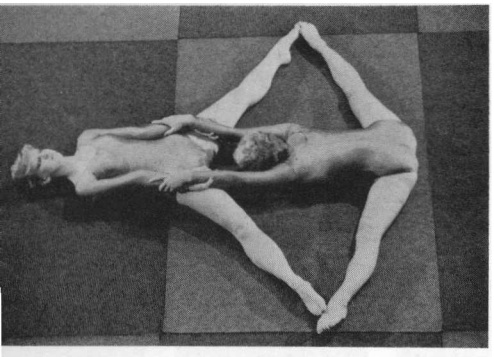
PARTNER EXERCISES

Shoulders

lOne person kneeling on both knees, clasping the hands behind the body. Put forehead on the floor and lift joined hands overhead. Partner gently pushes joined hands downward (x 4).
2 One person sitting on the floor, legs stretched forward, arms sideways. Keeping arms at shoulder level, partner pulls arms backwards (x 4).
3 One person bends forward and holds bane or beam at hip level, the other pushes shoulders down rhythmically by placing hand between the shoulder blades (x 4).

Back

One gymnast lies face downwards with arms stretched overhead, the other stands behind head and taking hold of arms pulls backwards. Try to keep the hips on the floor (x 4).
Do the same exercise holding the legs.



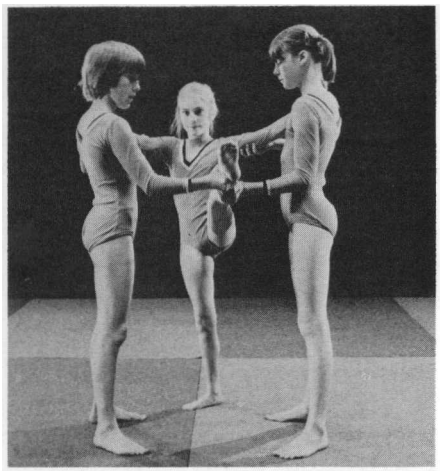
Legs

la The pair sit in straddle holding hands. One person lies backwards pulling the other person forward to place chest on floor. Repeat opposite way (x 8).

b To make this exercise more effective have one person in wide straddle sitting, the other standing in front pulling both hands in an upward and forward direction to place chest on floor (x 4).

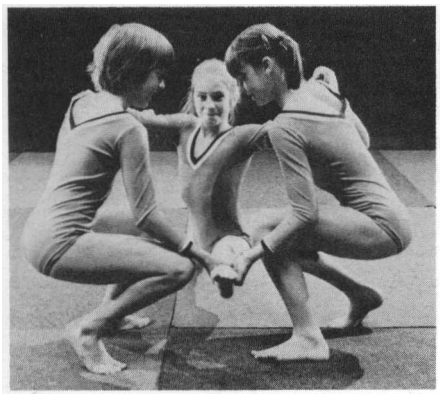
2 Holding a barre or beam, have the partner push the legs forwards, backwards and sideways. The ability to hold a high leg lift in all directions must be learned, as the achievement of splits with the aid of the floor is not sufficient to allow the leg to hold freely on its own (x 2).

EXERCISE FOR SPLITS IN GROUPS OF THREE



Two gymnasts stand facing, the third stands between them, one hand on each of their shoulders. The two supports hold one leg of the performer high in front and lower the leg forward to splits. Take care not to bend the back leg. Repeat with the other leg.

Note: When partners are used to assist in the execution of exercises the coach should take extra special care to ensure that the technique of the exercise is fully understood and that partners assisting the movement do so carefully and sensitively. In selecting partners due attention should be paid to size and weight.



Tightening the Bady

This is a key factor to success in the sport. Tightness is required from all participants, who must be trained to such an extent that the base makes a firm platform from which to support, throw and catch, while the top can be thrown or balanced like a caber, and the second or third members of a group do a combination of both.

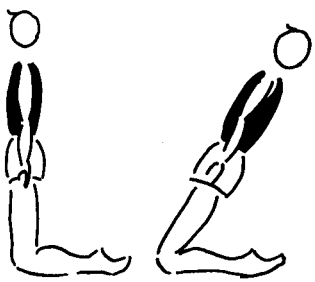
There is often confusion between gymnast and coach on this subject of tightness, as frequently the response is merely to stretch or extend, when what is actually required is a tightening of the abdominal, seat and leg muscles. Also there is a tendency to stiffen the arms and shoulders and hold the breath, which action results in hollowing the back. It is important to recognise tightness and not confuse this with extension. It is possible for a gymnast to be extremely well extended and have absolutely no tightness whilst another gymnast may have a very tight body and not be well extended. Do not relate tightness to extended arms and legs, for although they play a very important part in the final movement, it is the *body* that has to be trained for tightness because that is the area where most of the

body weight is and where most faults occur due to incorrect body shape during the movement. Therefore time must be spent on ensuring that performers know exactly what is required when asked- to 'tighten the body'.

A number of graded exercises follow:

1 Lying on the floor, tightening the required muscles and then relaxing will assist the gymnast to feel the contrast and know when the body is tight. By lying on the floor you can also be sure the back is straight by trying to press the spine into the floor so that the whole body is in contact with the floor from head to heels.

2 Having experienced tightness whilst the body is still, some movement is now necessary to see if the tightness can be maintained. With arms overhead do ~and full rolls over on the floor, maintaining a straight body line. If the body bends at the waist or the body as a whole does not roll together, the finished position will not be straight and there is lack of tightness, usually in the legs.



[3J

3 Kneel up on both knees. Allow the tight body to fall back until overbalancing point is reached, then return to starting position and repeat.

4 Tightening andrelaxing required muscles in standing position, followed by ~and full turn jumps, maintaining straight and tight body position. It is important for the jump to take off and land on the same spot.

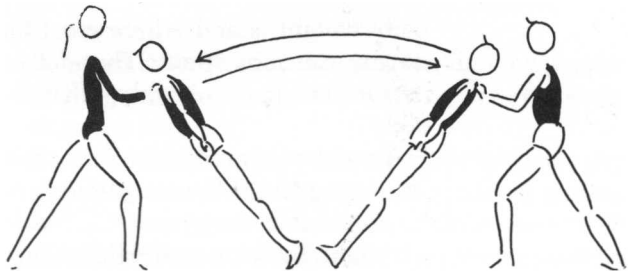
5 Falling to safety mats from either the floor, bench or box, straight and with ~turns.

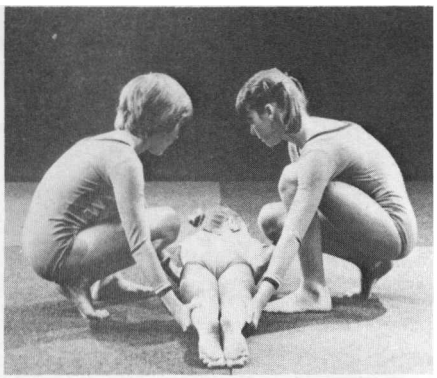
EXERCISES IN GROUPS OF THREE

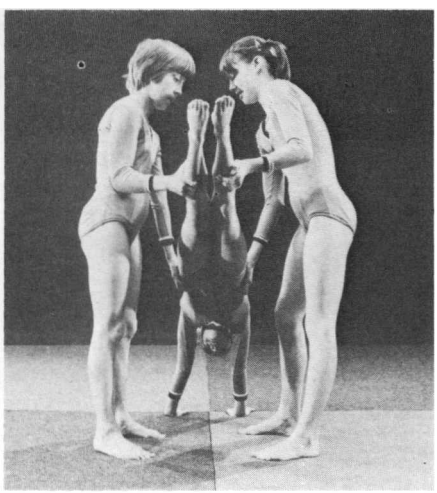
It is essential to take size and weight into account when grouping for these exercises. Group exercises require the ability to support and take weight, and are therefore not for very young gymnasts or absolute beginners; but a beginner may work with two more experienced people in order that tightness may be developed until such time as supporting becomes possible.

1 Two members of the group stand one on either side of the third member who stands sideways between them. Supporters taking hold of the hand and arm lower the third member of the group to the floor in a tight body position (for beginners it is helpful to have the heels against the edge of a mat to prevent slipping).

2a Two members of the group stand facing, the third member in the centre facing either one. Centre falls forward to be supported at the shoulders and is then pushed backwards and forwards between the pair, keeping body tight (see overleaf).







b For the more advanced performer this exercise can be done with the centre in handstand (see p. 55).

3 Two members of the group stand facing one another, the third person lying on the floor, arms above head. The two gymnasts hold legs and lift third person to handstand.

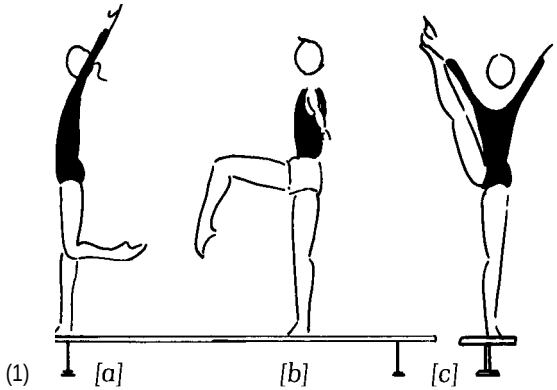
The last two exercises are possible only when a good handstand has been achieved.

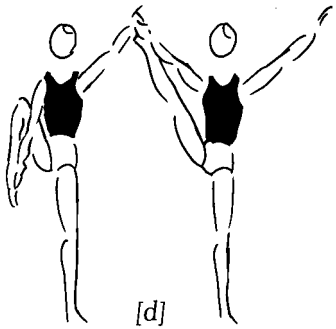
Basic Progressive Elements Leading to Partner Work

These elements should be practised at the same time as basic pair work; they are aimed at the more advanced skills and should not be left until that skill is required. In a progressive training system coaches must keep one step ahead in their preparation for the next level of difficulty, so that development is not held back, but coaches must ensure that each step is firmly established before the next one is attempted.

These preparatory elements are particularly valuable for a class situation when everyone can work together quite safely with the overall supervision of the coach. Everyone should learn all the basic elements as final selection for upper and lower partners is not possible at this early stage and in any case a knowledge of all aspects is particularly advantageous to the eventual formation of women's trios and men's groups.

All types of equipment can be adapted for use in this section, the aim being to give height from the floor and reduce the size of the area on which the element is practised in preparation for working with a partner. When learning what appear to be very basic elements the gymnast will respond more readily if the reason for mastering this element is fully explained. Some examples of the skills at which the practice elements are aimed are shown at the end of this section.



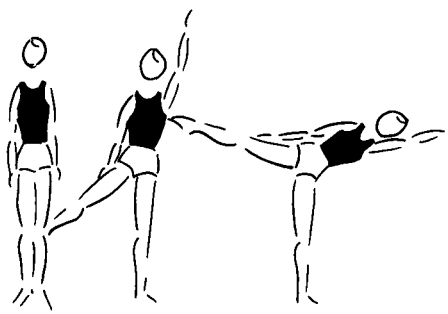


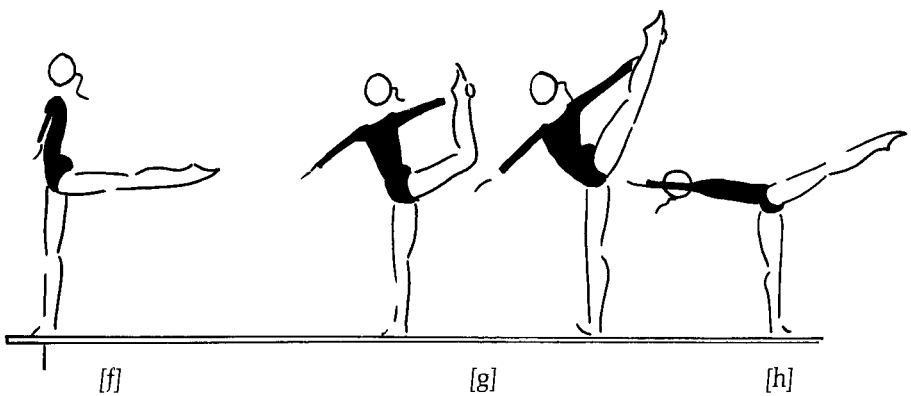
PRACTICE ELEMENTS

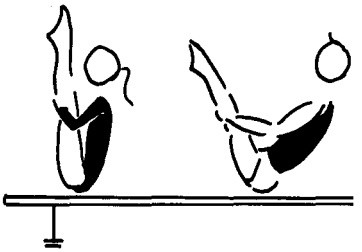
1 The weight is taken on to the supporting leg before the free leg is lifted. The body is held straight and tight over the supporting leg. Any deviation from the centre of gravity will result in overbalancing. Take care not to lean upper body sideways when lifting leg (see c and *d).*

2 Special concentration is required in these four elements to ensure that the working of the leg or the tilting of the body does not disturb the centre of gravity. In h the raised leg must be pushed forward in order to keep the weight over the supporting leg. Observation of this element shows that one leg is counterbalancing the whole of the body and therefore the hips must be kept over the supporting leg by pushing the raised leg forward. If the hips are not pushed over the supporting leg the weight of the body will cause the balance to fail.

Balances c, d, e, f, g, in addition to being individual elements (see p. 54) which may be used to form part of the tariff for competition, are also simple pair supports and should therefore be practised on both legs.







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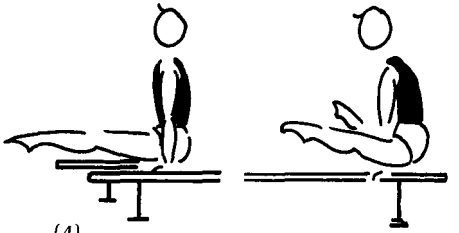
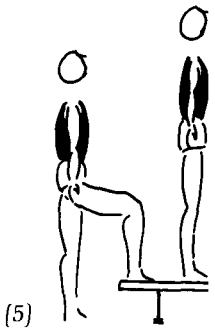


(4)

3 A balanced 'V' sit or supple 'pike' position for tempo elements is required and should be practised at basic level.

4 Half lever and straddle half lever are used in all sections. Parallel bars are ideal for learning these skills, but if these are not available benches or boxes placed side by side will give a practice situation.

5 Step up to stand in hands, straight and with! turn, is an important linking movement, applicable to all pairs and some group work. The natural tendency when learning is to lean away from your partner, whereas what is actually required is a confident step forward and upward directly over the partner, keeping the upper body over the stepping-up leg.

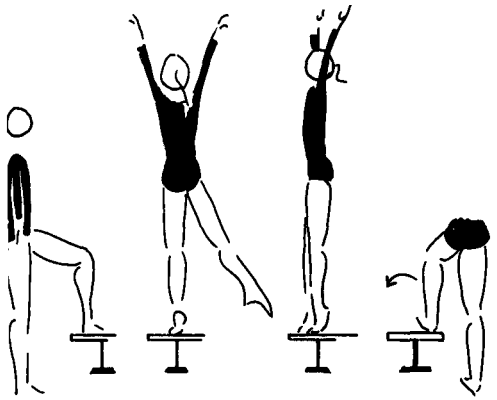


(5)

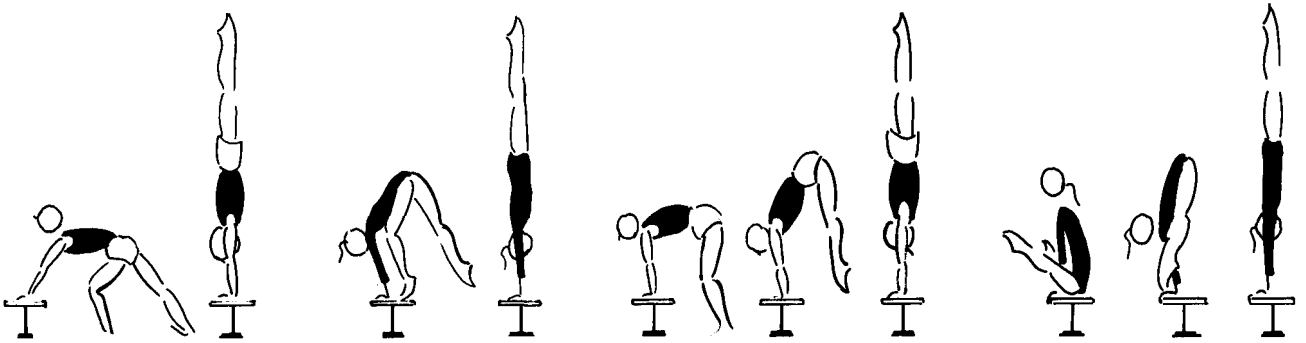
This movement can in fact be likened, to walking up a staircase, which one does quite naturally, keeping the weight over the stepping-up leg, and in fact this simple everyday action of climbing highlights one of the main features of the sport.

The ~turn (below left) follows the same rules for the step upwards, the most common error here being that the turn is usually made too early instead of at the height of the lift. This means that even when practising this element at basic level on a bench or similar item, the turn must not be made until the second foot to leave the floor is on a level with the first foot.

A common error when extending both arms to the vertical is to take them back behind the head under the assumption that by doing this they are fully extended. In fact to keep the body in the correct position the arms should stop at the vertical, as movement beyond this point tends to affect the body shape.

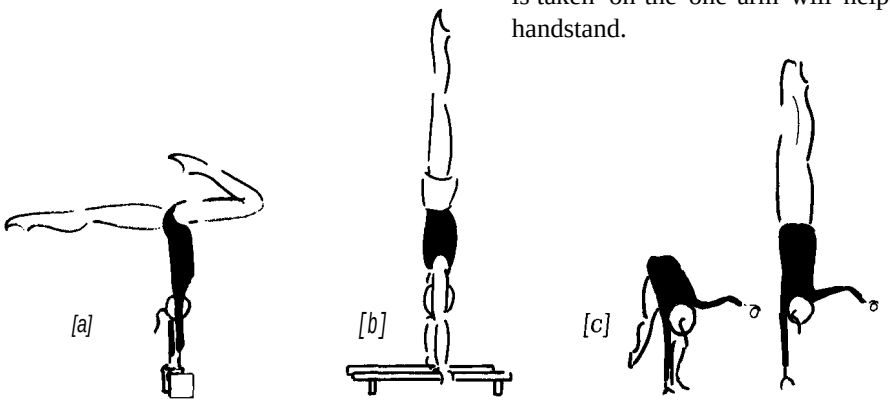


6 The handstand (described on p. 55) is one of the most used elements and must be practised individually in as many different situations as possible to simulate the very many ways of using it in a pair or group situation. The handstand should always be learned on the floor before transferring to equipment. When transferring the handstand to the bench etc. for the first time difficulty may be experienced in making the stronger lift with the first leg to put the hips and shoulders in line

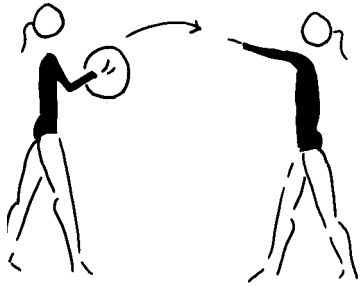


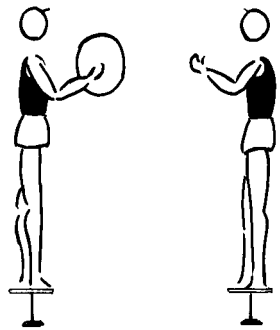
with hands. In this event it will be helpful to work in groups in order to receive the necessary support.

7 Handstand on wooden blocks as in a or a bar or bars as in b where the hand is not completely flat gives a better simulation of hand grip with a partner. The female section of the sport constantly uses the 'stag' a and the various types of entry into the handstand shown above should be adapted to include this variation if required. Practice situation c is used in women's pairs and trios and as most of the weight is taken on the one arm will help the development of the one- arm handstand.



Exercises which give the opportunity of taking weight without the need to involve a second person are of benefit to future lower partners, since they train the lower partner to watch and time the movements. For example, in football it is most important to 'watch the ball'. In sports acrobatics every movement of the upper partner must be followed by the lower partner to achieve perfect teamwork and consequently successful skills. In the early days of preparation it is vital that preliminary skills are

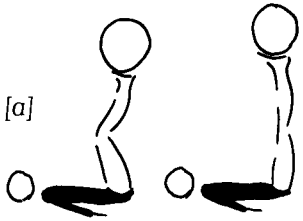




learned so that practice can be done safely before the more dynamic aspects of the sport with a partner can be attempted. Throwing and catching an object such as a moderately weighted medicine ball can be used to develop both timing and strength in the lower partner.

8 The aim is to keep a straight body position as the ball is caught. The knees will bend to absorb the shock but the body must be kept straight and tight, and in this connection one foot forward will give a more stable base and allow some corrective movement when the body contacts with the moving weight, thereby eliminating loss of balance. However, some elements-particularly in group work-require the gymnast to keep the correct weight distribution and to use the arms without moving the feet from a side-standing position. If this element is practised on a bench, the feet cannot be moved.

9 Correct performance of the elements illustrated above is particularly important because they are much-used elements in the construction of advanced routines. Note the correct and incorrect shoulder position in b and apply this to c, d and e.



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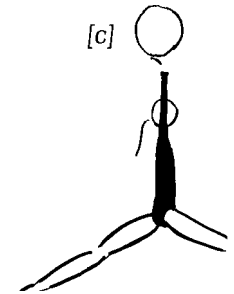

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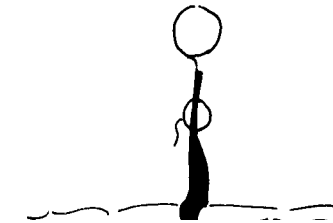

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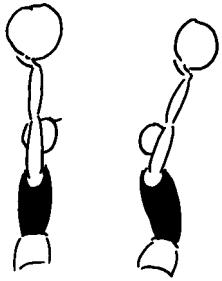

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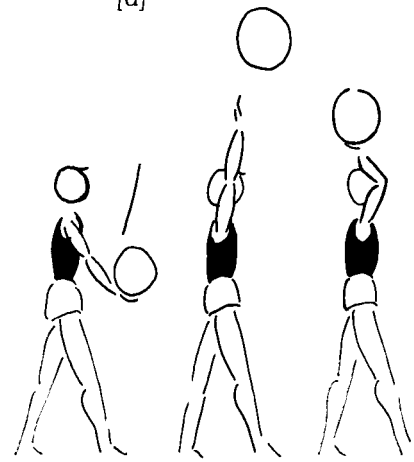
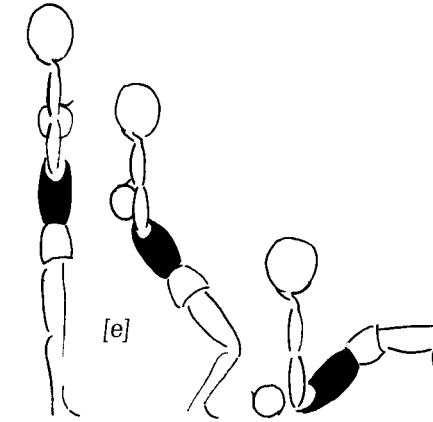
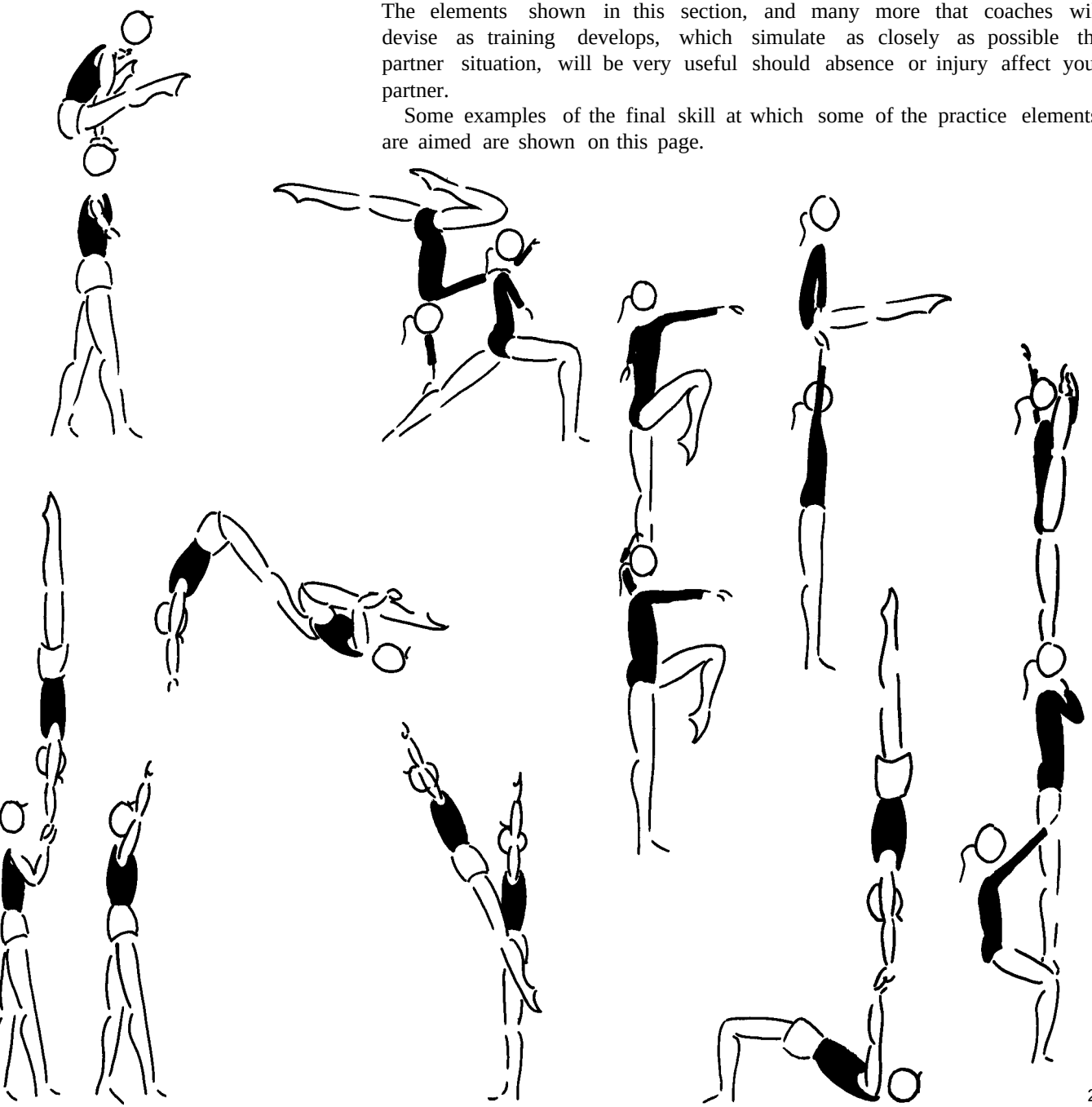




[e]

The elements shown in this section, and many more that coaches will devise as training develops, which simulate as closely as possible the partner situation, will be very useful should absence or injury affect your partner.

Some examples of the final skill at which some of the practice elements are aimed are shown on this page.



Ballet and Sports Acrobatics

Basic ballet training will greatly assist the main requirements of the sport, namely balance, body tightness, body awareness, strength in back and legs. and a straight but flexible spine. It also assists the general presentation of an exercise and helps to eliminate a number of faults such as bent arms, bent knees and bad placement of feet for which points are frequently lost.

The establishment of ballet within the warm-up structure will prepare both male and female performers for the competitive routine, enabling full extension and amplitude to become automatic to the performer at all times. The most important thing is of course to perform the exercises correctly. If this is not done with particular emphasis on placement of trunk and limbs then the correct results will not be achieved.

As ballet is a very specialised subject in its own right, to teach performers properly would monopolise the whole of our training time. Therefore it is more beneficial to cover a few ballet exercises which have particular advantage to the sport and to do these constantly and correctly, than to attempt numerous exercises and not have the time to execute them properly. To have a qualified dance teacher for these sessions is obviously a great advantage, but often this is not possible and coaches should be aware of the basic requirements of ballet which apply to sports acrobatics. Ballet exercises should be taught to performers, both male and female, at all levels but particularly in the beginning in order to prevent the formation of bad habits which will be much more difficult to correct at a more advanced level.

One of the main problems is establishing a natural turn-out from the hip, which when achieved gives a much better line to the exciting and very creative routines which contain so many variations in all types of movement and dance. The gymnast performing sports acrobatics does not need the same degree of turn-out as the ballet dancer, but does require this to become a natural habit in the same way as tightening the body at the appropriate time.

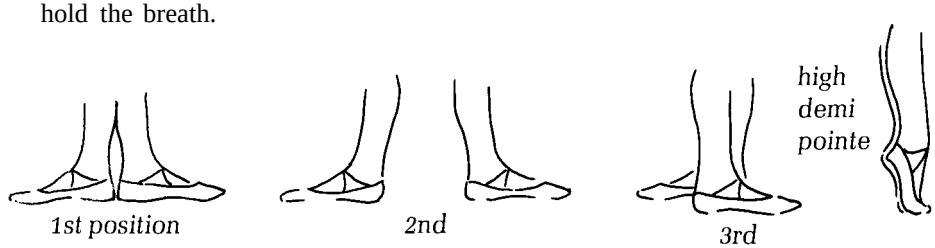
Two ways of establishing the 'feel' of the turn-out are:

1. Stand feet together, then turn toes outward. If you stand opposite a partner you will see that turning out the feet also outwardly rotates the knee and completely alters the line of the leg.
2. Lie on your back, feet and knees together. Feel the turn-out by rotating the whole leg outward.

Sports acrobatics requires the performer, particularly female upper partners, to have both a straight and a supple back. Learning to control the back can be a difficult process, especially for the person who begins

training with an already very supple back, as he or she will tend to use the bend in the back to maintain balance. Therefore it is important for everyone to learn to stand correctly before commencing the ballet exercises.

Stand erect, balanced evenly on the feet, eyes directed forward. There is a tendency to lean back with weight on the heels, whereas it should be spread evenly between the big and little toes and the heel. Seat muscles are pulled downwards and inwards and stomach muscles pulled in. As mentioned in the section on tightening the body, do not stiffen arms and hold the breath.



Demi plie **in first position**

Commence with the hand resting lightly on the barre (beams, wall bars or chairs can be adapted for this purpose), feet in first position. Relax the knees and ankles and as the body descends press the heels firmly in to the floor, keeping the knees over the toes. When the limit has been reached with the heels on the floor, straighten the knees and return to stand.

Full plie **in first position**

Commence as for the demi plie but when the limit has been reached with the heels on the floor, which marks the end of the demi plie, lift the heels gradually and continue to descend, keeping the knees and ankles relaxed. Do not sit in the plie, but when the limit of relaxation in the knees and ankles has been reached ascend returning the heels to the floor as early as possible to push the legs straight to stand. Keep the movement of the plie continuous from start to finish.

Demi and full plie **in second position**

As a plie in first but with feet in second position; on the full plie the heels remain firmly on the floor throughout the exercise.

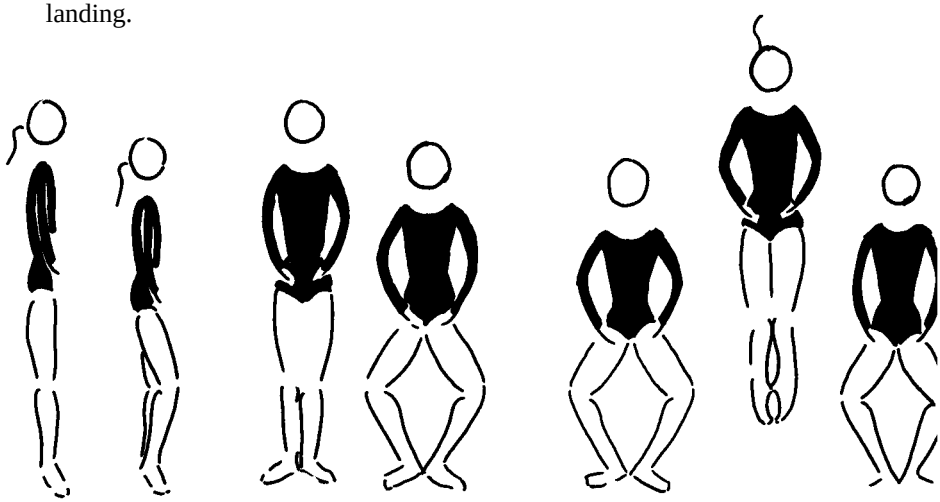
Maximum push

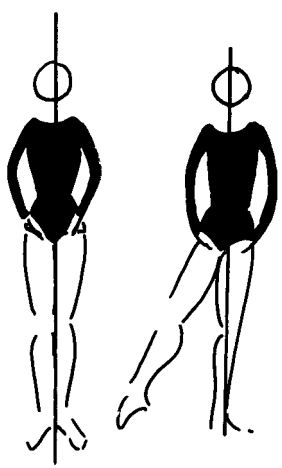
To gain maximum push from the floor in jumps and in tumbling it is necessary to make full use of the foot. It is important therefore to be aware

of the supple movement provided by the foot, which is often overlooked.

Stand on two feet, raise heels from floor slowly followed by rest of foot, feeling each part of the foot as it is 'peeled' from the floor, until a high demi pointe is reached. Note that the weight is now evenly on the three middle toes. Reverse the action to return to stand. Repeat the above exercise with the toes turned a little way out and do a demi plie before rising to high demi pointe and again on returning the heels to the ground.

Still using the foot in the same way and concentrating particularly on the heel pushing off and returning to the ground each time, make a small jump from the demi plie, Although the movement will be much faster you still pass through the high demi pointe before leaving the floor and again when landing.

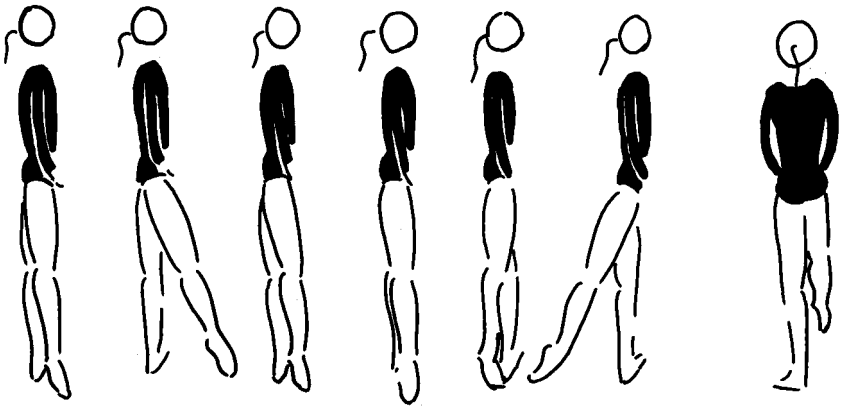




Transfer of weight

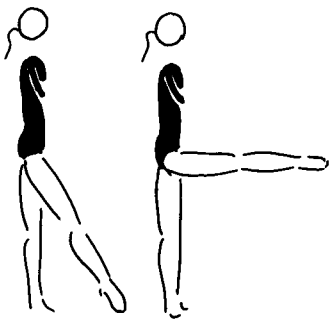
This is particularly applicable because there are many occasions in advanced sports acrobatics when a transfer of weight is necessary. It is therefore essential to understand this from a balancing point of view when learning simple exercises on the floor.

Stand with feet in first position and move one leg out to the side keeping the knee outwardly rotated. The transfer of weight needed to do this is so slight that it will probably not be noticed unless attention is drawn to it. The drawing left shows that when the feet are together the central line runs from the head to the heels, whereas when the working leg is moved to the side the weight is transferred to the supporting leg. Take care to ensure that it is the transfer of weight to the supporting leg that maintains the balance, not a bend in the upper body.

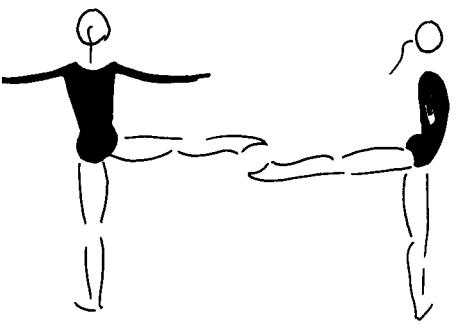


Battement tendu

This exercise helps to illustrate the transfer of weight situation and the independent working of the leg from the body, which allows many different changes in position of arms and legs without disturbing the balance. Commence in third position, one hand resting lightly on barre, working leg in front. The working leg is furthest away from the barre. The other arm is held naturally to the side, head erect. Slide working foot forward, keeping the heel on the floor for as long as possible, until the toe is fully pointed with the leg turned out. Draw the foot back to the starting position, returning the heel to the floor as soon as possible. Slide the foot to the side, maintaining the turn-out of the leg so that the heel is underneath the foot. Close the foot behind and slide backwards, again concentrating on the position of the heel. Close the foot behind, slide out to the side and close in front. Turn so that the other hand is resting on the barre and repeat on the opposite leg. The supporting leg must be straight at all times.



Grand battement



Start as for the battement tendu, but when the foot is completely extended on the floor, lift the leg as high as possible without disturbing the position of the hips or bending the support leg. Rotate the leg outwardly; you should get the feeling of pushing down on the hip joint as the leg is raised. Repeat to the side and back, remembering always to slide the foot along the floor before the lift.

As an aid to controlling, strengthening and suppling the limbs for future balancing with a partner, perform the above exercise free from the barre and hold the raised leg for at least six seconds in the forward, sideways and backwards position.

Spins and turns

Spins and turns play a major part both in the composition of routines and in the pair and group elements. They are again a matter of balance, the aim being to keep the body weight over the supporting leg. At the beginning of the turn, which should be on the toe, there must be a strong pull upwards from the foot through the legs and body to keep the weight over the supporting leg. If the body is not kept tight and upright during the turn loss of balance will occur.

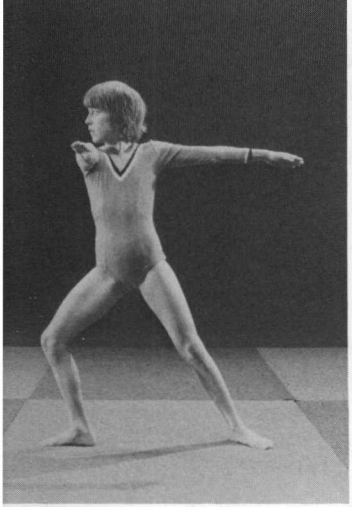
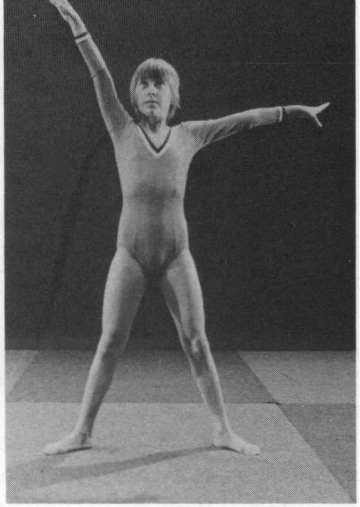
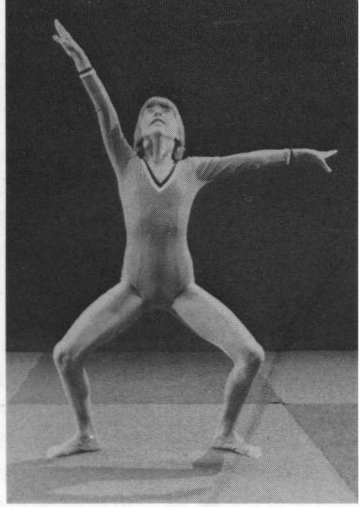
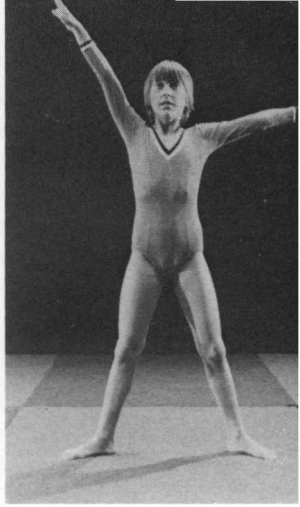
Commence with simple ~turns on toes of both feet, then go on to the use of one foot, putting the transfer of weight into practice. The free leg can be placed forward or backwards. Always practise turns to both left and right.

When the! turns and spins can be performed successfully, do a full spin. Keeping the weight over the supporting leg, while thrusting upwards from the foot, is absolutely vital to retain proper balance.

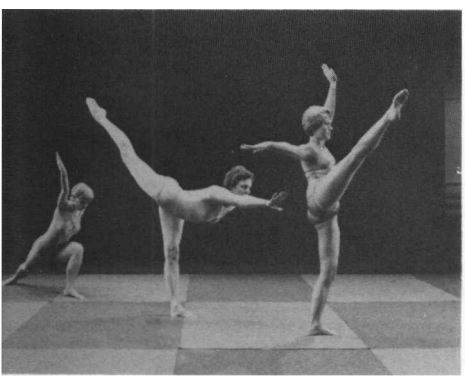
The arms and head

A free and natural use of the arms and head is not easy to establish unless preparatory training is done. Some performers find it very easy to co-ordinate arms and head and be very expressive, but others who have no aptitude for this must be trained early so as to avoid a pair situation where one individual is losing marks for the pair on the grounds of incomplete movements. Therefore exercises in connection with ballet and body preparation should include some direction for the arms and head. The following sequence combines exercises which assist co-ordination of the arms, legs and head, continuity of movement, turn out of the legs, balance, jumps and spins, and also gives the feeling of teamwork essential to the sport. It should be performed to music using 4/4 time. (Number of bars is shown at left, with numbers of beats in brackets after each exercise.)

Lunge sideways to the right, right arm forward, left arm sideways, head to the right (2).
Return weight to both feet at the same time lifting right arm
1 upwards, head forward (2).
2 Demi plie in second position, head back (4). (See top of next page).
Transfer weight to left leg, point right toe close feet to first position,
3 right arm side (4).
4 Demi plie in first position (4).
8 Repeat using opposite leg
8/16 Repeat both sides

Four jumps in first position, then moving left arm sideways, circle right arm across body overhead to side, head following right arm
4 (jumps 8, circle 8).
Repeat three times, alternating direction of arm circle to opposite
12/16 side.



Step right diagonally, lift left leg forward through bent knee position
1 to high leg lift, right arm upward, left arm sideways (4).
Swing left leg backwards into arabesque, changing arms to left arm
2 forward, right arm backwards (4).
Bend right knee and place left leg backwards into a deep lunge
3 position, weight over forward bent knee (4).
Keeping weight on right leg, straighten knee and stand with left toe
4 resting on ground (4).
Step sideways to left, arms moving through sideways position, lift right leg forward diagonally and repeat from beginning on opposite
4 side.
8/16 Repeat both sides.

Place right foot sideways and bend knees in demi plie in second position, at the same time swinging both arms downwards and across the body into deep side stretch, weight on right leg, left toe on
1 floor, both legs straight, arms overhead (4).
Repeat on opposite side by bringing both arms downward, swinging them in front of the body to the left, at the same time passing through
2 a demi plie into deep side stretch, arms overhead.
6/8 Repeat six times, drawing feet together on last one.

Jump from two feet at the same time making a ¼ left turn to land in lunge position with the right leg forward, left arm forward, right arm
1 sideways (4).
Taking weight on the right leg, make a ¼ left turn, joining feet
2 together (4).
Step forward right, making a ¼ right turn and joining feet together.
4 Step forward left making a ¼ left turn, joining feet together (8).
4/8 Repeat on opposite leg.

Step sideways to the right, arms sideways, and make a 360° spin to the right on toes of right foot, left leg bent, toes resting on calf, knee
1 turned outwards (4).
Keeping the left foot off the floor, rise on toes of right foot, lift left leg high diagonally forwards and place on floor in lunge position. Arms lift forward and upward with leg lift and as the leg drops to the lunge position arms are lowered to left arm sideways, right arm forwards (4).
2 Swinging right arm downwards and sideways, transfer weight to right leg, lift left leg high. Hold momentarily and return to original
3 lunge position (4).
Taking weight on left leg and bringing arms downward, spin
4 forward on left foot making a ~turn to face forward (4).
4/8 Repeat on opposite leg.
16 Repeat both sides.

Basic Pair Work

PARTNER SELECTION

This is probably the most important feature of the sport, and it is vital to remember that in classes for beginners the aim is to provide plenty of basic pair work which will give the coach some idea of the ability of the individual, rather than at the first lesson to pair off the group and expect the pairs to remain together. It is a mistake to select pairs too early as there is so much to take into account before doing this. A vast amount of general class work in pairs should be undertaken, changing pairs constantly before putting any pair together to attempt serious balance work. Some of the most important considerations in partner selection are these:

Weight

The nature of the sport in pairs is that the lower partner supports the upper partner and to make this possible the lower should be the heavier.

Size

It is advantageous, particularly in the initial stages of training, for the upper partner to be smaller than the lower, but a large size difference is not advised. Over a period of time the upper partner will probably increase in weight and equal the height of the lower partner, but during the time he or she remains lighter, confidence will already have been established and difficult skills learned, so that the pair will absorb the increase in height and weight without problem.

Personality

Taking personality into account is one of the reasons why pairs should not be selected too early; coaches need time to study the attitude of one person to another. If there is a personality clash the relationship will not be successful no matter how much ability there is within the pair.

Music and dance interpretation

This is an individual characteristic which will be present in some gymnasts and not in others. Therefore much work must be done by working in pairs or in a team situation to encourage the development of a flair for creating links to music for future voluntary routines. This allows the coach to study the way in which a gymnast responds to these two aspects with a view to future pairing.

Individual elements

The system of judging makes it essential that pairs are of the same potential tumbling ability. It is possible even at basic level to have a fair knowledge of what the future tumbling ability will be, particularly as everyone should include tumbling in the basic training.

Discipline

This aspect is not only necessary from a coaching point of view or to obtain results, but is an important safety factor when balancing two or more people together. Therefore participants in the sport must understand the need for this and their attitude must be taken into account in the selection of pairs; an indisciplined pair would be a liability in any gymnasium.

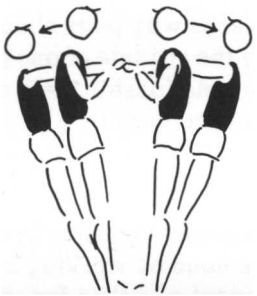
Selection on a 'friendship' level

It is natural that when a group of gymnasts is told to select a partner,

friends will gravitate towards each other. Although this will be enjoyable on a recreational basis, it will not necessarily produce a partnership which has a competitive future, so participants should be educated from the beginning to accept that it is part of the sport to partner off with the reasons listed above in mind in order to create more successful partnerships.

BASIC SUPPORTS AND BALANCES

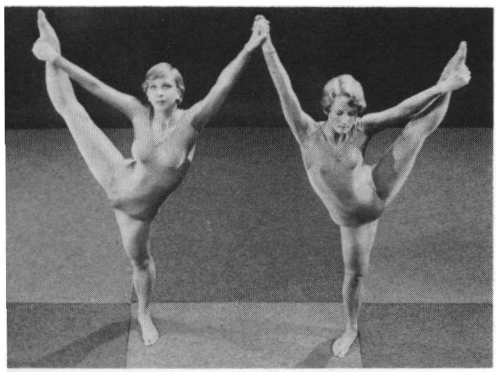
The first aspect of actually working in pairs is the 'support' situation. This means learning to work with a partner in a situation where pairs support each other without actually taking the full weight of their partner, and where both partners remain on the ground.



Counterbalance

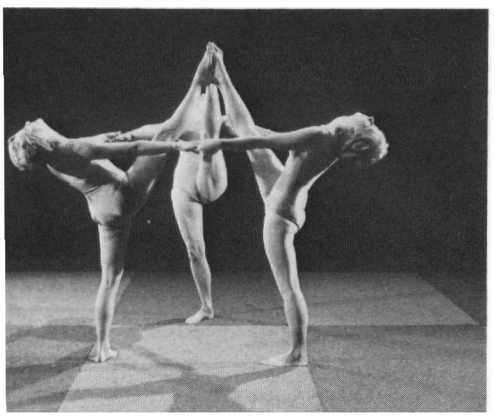
Stand with feet close to partner, holding hands, arms bent. Keeping body tight and straight lean backwards away from partner, slowly extending arms. Make sure the pair lean backwards at the same time to create a counterbalance situation.

The same exercise can be performed in groups of three or four and will help the development of teamwork which is so vital to the sport.



Single leg balance supports

1. Using partner support lift and hold one leg forwards, sideways or backwards.
   Note the suppleness in the legs in all elements and the upright position of body to prevent overbalancing and create a balance which will still be secure if performed standing on another person.
2. Stand facing partner, holding hands. Lift and bend opposite legs and place foot against foot of partner. Using foot of partner as support, push lifted legs straight.
   Do the same exercise in three or more. Progress from this to a more difficult element by adding a backward walk-over from the high leg lift.

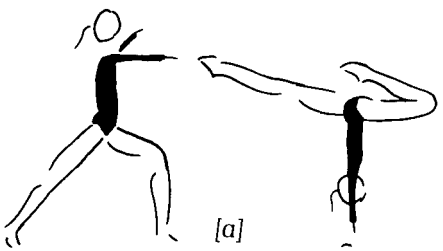


Handstand supports

In this type of support, the handstand is held very lightly by the supporter, who should not have to take all the weight; for this reason a correct handstand should be learned before moving to pair elements (see p. 55). The distance between the pair should be worked out so that the arms of both

partners are straight and the person performing the handstand has a straight body, irrespective of the position of the legs, Le. straight or stag.

1 Note that in b the hands of the support should be on the hips to prevent the handstand bending over at the waist. In c the handstand takes place close to the feet of the support to keep the balance vertical. The leg angle of the support will vary according to the size of the partner.



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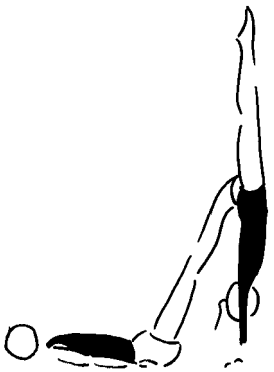

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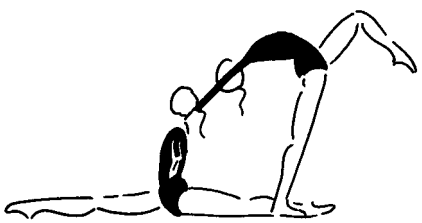
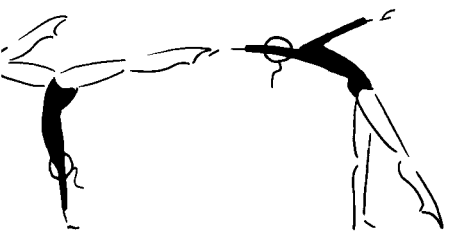


2 These are more advanced supports and should be performed only when a good controlled handstand, split and bridge are achieved. These supports will need the aid of the coach at the first attempts to establish direction and distance between partners.

Progressing from basic supports, performers should now move on to the pair work where the lower partner supports the whole weight of the upper partner. If the correct preparation has been followed then both partners will have learned how to tighten the body and how to cope with weight distribution, making balancing easier. In addition to the above, partners must now learn the meaning of timing or synchronisation with another person. Up to now all balancing has been on an immovable object, such as a bench or box horse, which has none of the human elements and is very unlikely to collapse. When starting balancing with a person for the first time it is helpful to establish some sort of signal, either by word or touch when you are going to start, so that neither is unprepared. Eventually between the pair a 'feeling' of timing will be established and a signal will not be necessary. This, however, will only come with constantly working with other people in a team situation. Once the balance has commenced it must continue with sureness and smoothness, each step immediately following the last one until the balance point is reached. Hesitation and

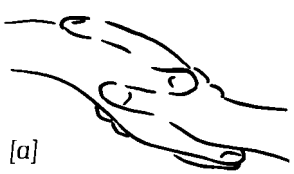


lack of confidence can cause wrong distribution of weight and the collapse of the element.

Basic balancing should commence with the lower partner in a back-lying position to give confidence and minimise risk of both partners collapsing.

The hand grip

Some of the many hand grips used in the sport are illustrated below. It is important to realise that in the main a natural hand grip is used. Therefore offering the hand, as in a hand shake (as in drawing a) without any unnatural turning or twisting of the wrist will be successful. In some instances there will be a personal preference for a certain hand grip, e.g. hand to hand grip with the upper partner in a handstand where the hands of the lower partner can either be straight or bent backwards. This is quite acceptable as long as the arm and shoulder line is maintained. However, the hand grips used for lifting and throwing are more unusual and are used to give the most secure platform for the upper partner and the strongest lifting position for the lower partner. Therefore attention to detail prior to learning a skill involving one of these grips is of vital importance. band c are used for lifting and throwing; d is used by women's trio and men's group and is referred to as the 'platform'.



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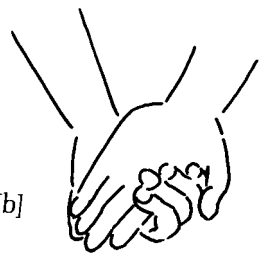

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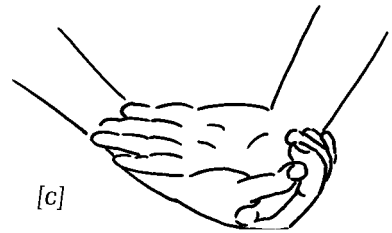


[c]

[d]

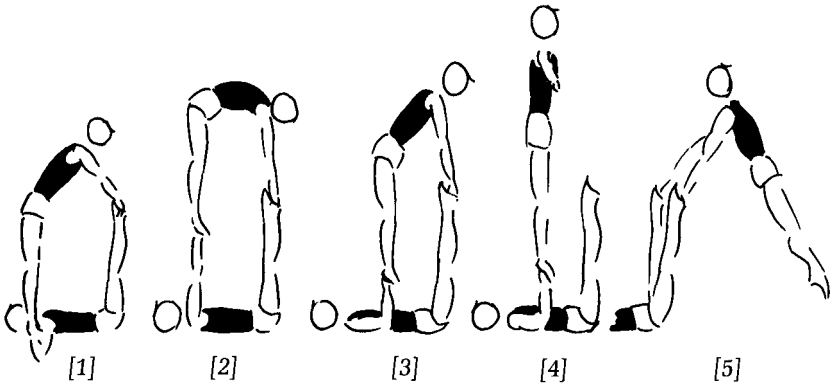
The foot hold

For foot holds, unless otherwise stated or more successful, the most natural is a firm hold around the instep, the curve of which fits closely in to the palm of the hand, giving the lower partner a good grip around the sides of the heel.

Balance 1: stand in hands

Step 1

Lower partner in back-lying position with legs vertical, hands on either side of head. Upper partner holds feet of lower partner, placing feet in hands of lower partner.



Steps 2 and 3

The weight of the upper partner is then taken on the feet of the lower partner who lifts upwards and forwards to a position where the elbows are resting on the floor close to the sides and the forearm is vertical.

Step 4

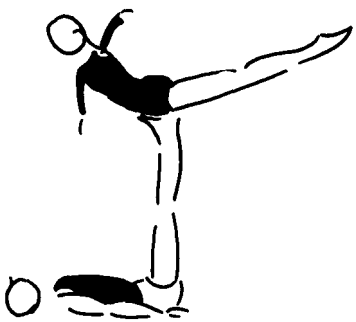
Upper partner releases feet of lower partner and stands holding a straight, tight body position, which allows the lower partner to control the balance.

Step 5

There are two recognised exits from this balance. Both require the upper partner to take hold of the feet of the lower partner and then either take weight on feet, keeping arms straight, bringing legs forward through legs of lower partner to stand (illustrated); or the lower partner returns arms to original starting position.

Progression

Replace the lift to bent arms (steps 2 and 3) with a lift to straight arms.



From a balance where the upper partner remains vertical, move to a situation where the horizontal position is used and the support is taken on the feet.

Balance 2: forward angel

Step 1

Lower partner, back-lying, takes hands of partner, placing feet, slightly turned out, in partner's hips. The feet must be in the hips, not in the stomach, for correct weight distribution. (See diagrams on p. 43 for the

angle of the legs of the lower partner from hip to knee and the fact that the feet are above and in line with the seat, which is the best position from which to push the legs straight to vertical whilst maintaining the weight on the feet.)

Step 2

Pulling on the joined hands, lower partner straightens legs upwards to vertical, keeping the seat on the floor. Upper partner stretches forward with the movement towards partner's head, raising both legs backwards and holding upper body slightly above horizontal.

Step 3

Release hand hold. Upper partner raises upper body and legs to maintain free balance. Lying face downwards on the floor and lifting upper body and legs is a practice which will help this action. Reverse entry procedure for dismount.

Progression

Paying special attention to the leg angle of lower partner, body tightness and lift of upper partner, lift straight to balance without first taking hand support. Alternative dismount: lower partner moves legs forward overhead to allow upper partner to place hands on either side of partner's head and either forward roll, handstand roll or forward walk-over out of balance.

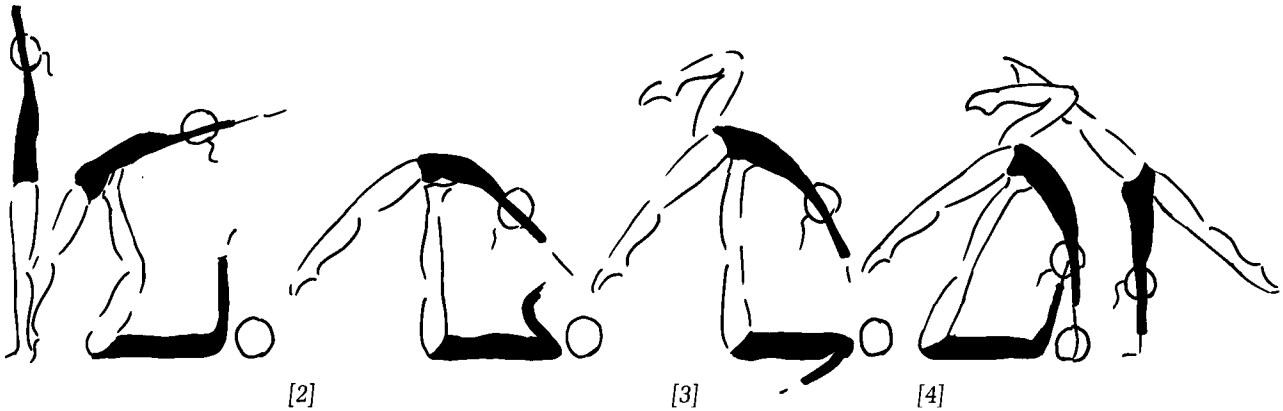
Balance 3 : backward angel

Step 1

Lower partner, back-lying, places feet in lower back of upper partner. Upper partner leans backwards against feet of lower partner who then bends knees and the pair join hands. Whether the upper partner takes the arms overhead through back arch as shown or sideways using a shoulder movement to join hands of lower partner depends on the back and shoulder suppleness of the upper partner. This balance is successful with the feet of the lower partner together and straight, or heels together and toes turned out, as long as the weight is carried correctly, Le.lower back.

Step 2

Lower partner pulls on joined hands, at the same time straightening legs to vertical, keeping the seat on the floor (see diagrams for correct leg position). If the final balance is to show one leg bent in 'stag', this position should be taken immediately after the feet have left the floor.



[I] [2] [3] [4]

Step 3

Lower partner releases hands, lowering arms to floor, whilst upper partner maintains a tight body position.

Step 4

Dismount with the lower partner moving the legs forward overhead and taking the shoulders of the upper partner, who then places the hands on the floor on either side of head of lower partner, lifting legs over to the floor in a backward walk-over movement.

Progression

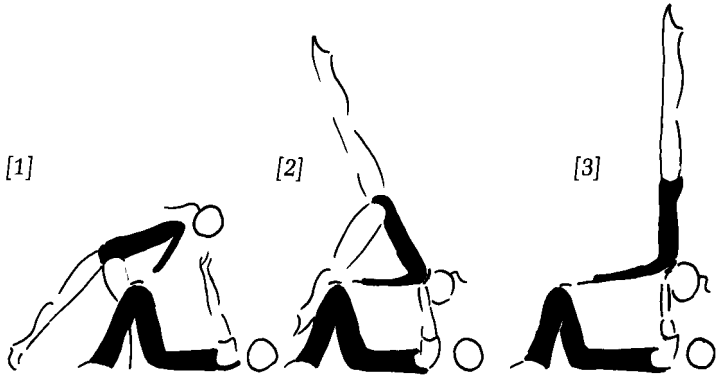
Paying special attention to leg angle of lower partner and tight body position of upper partner, lift straight to balance without hand support. Add continuity to the balance by having the upper partner dismount as above, but continuing into a backward walk-over, backward roll to handstand, flic flac or dance element, complemented by a similar element from the lower partner.

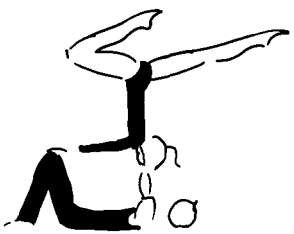
When the upper partner has had experience of both vertical and horizontal positions it is desirable to go on to inverted balance.

Balance 4 : knee and shoulder

Step 1 (see diagrams on next *page)*

Lower partner in back-lying position, knees slightly apart and bent, both arms vertical. Upper partner with one foot in front of the other places hands on knees of lower partner. Hands may be placed forward and for some progressive balances, or when there is a large size difference, will need to be so, but in the learning stages the hands in reverse make





counterbalancing easier as there is a pull against the legs of the lower partner which prevents the shoulder stand over-rotating. In this drop forward by the upper partner to the arms of the lower partner there is a tendency for the arms of one or both partners to bend. As the success of this balance depends on straight arms throughout the movement the drop should be practised on its own, moving on to step 2 only when this is confident and correct. The other important factor is the stability of the legs of the lower partner.

Steps 2 and 3

After the drop forward the upper partner kicks one leg at a time to shoulder stand, bearing in mind that the back should be straight and tight, the balance being completely vertical. The lower partner must maintain a straight arm position throughout, feet flat on the floor and a tight and stable knee position.

When a confident balance is assured steps I, 2 and 3 can be joined together to give a smooth and continuous entry. This entry, however, must be attempted only when the pair have mastered the drop forward with straight arms. Reverse the entry procedure for the dismount.

Progression

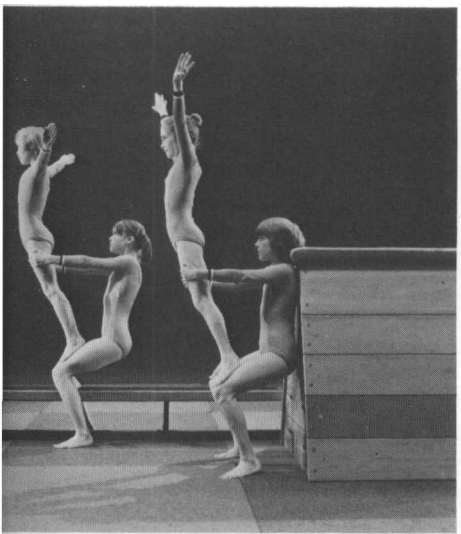
Lower partner raises legs.

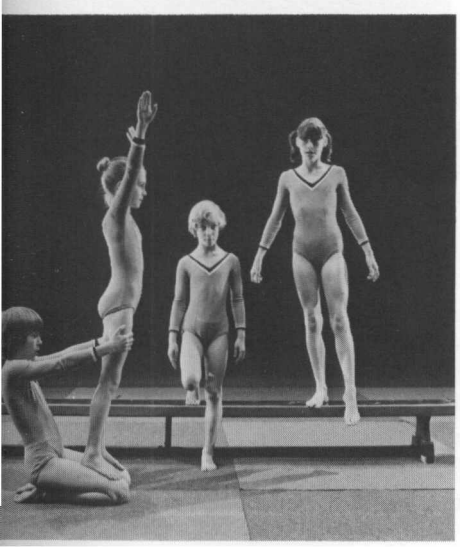
Upper partner transfers hands from knees to arms of lower partner.

From knee and shoulder balance in stag handstand, lower partner lifts one leg to vertical, supporting knee of upper partner. Upper partner holds arms sideways. Reverse the entry procedure for the dismount.

Alternative dismount: upper partner releases hands, places arms sideways and allows body to fall over to land on one leg behind head of lower partner (forward walk-out].

The next two balances are very important to the sport as they are the basis of many elements in all pairs and groups. Having experienced the balance situation with the lower partner on the floor supporting the body in different ways it is possible to progress to both partners standing.





Balance 5 : stand on knees

Allow the pair to appreciate the balance in the first instance by having the lower partner kneeling on the floor. The sitting position with a straight back required by the lower partner can best be achieved by using a box or bench. This lets the upper partner step onto the knees straight from the box or bench without the anxiety of a climbing situation, ensuring that the lower partner is confident of the required hold before attempting the complete balance.

When familiar with this position the lower partner slowly raises seat from bench to appreciate distribution of weight and balance. Upper partner does not lean forward but stands upright.

In attempting the balance without the use of the box or bench, there are three methods of entry to the stand on knees.

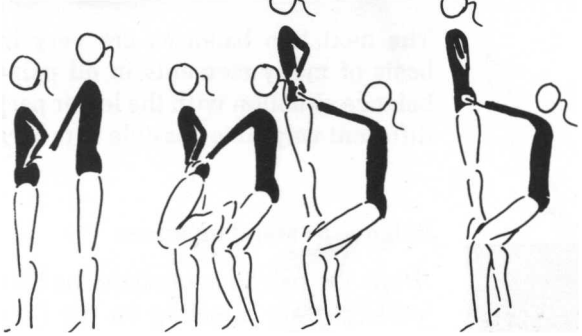
1 Lower partner stands behind and holds waist of upper partner. Upper partner, holding wrists of lower partner, places one foot backwards on to bent knee of lower partner and then with a push from this foot in an upward direction places second foot on bent knee of lower partner to stand with both legs straight and body vertical.

2 This is the smooth est entry as there is no hand change. Lower partner stands behind upper partner, placing hands on legs of upper partner above the knees. Upper partner places one foot backwards on bent knee of lower partner and with a push from the foot in an upward direction places second foot on bent knee of lower partner to stand with both knees straight and body vertical.

3 As entry 1 but instead of stepping backwards one foot at a time upper partner jumps from two feet. It is easier to establish a rhythm for the hand change with the jump from two feet, which will take place as the upper partner straightens the legs. However, the same principle of standing erect and not leaning forward still applies. This method of entry is more popular in the men's and mixed pairs events.

Step 1

When placing the first foot there must be a thrust in an upward direction so that the first leg is straight before the second foot is placed, otherwise



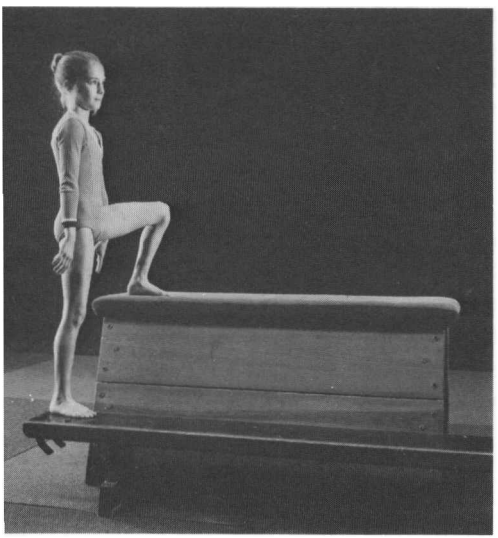
[1] [2] [3]

the upper partner will pull the lower partner off balance. This backward step is difficult at first and as illustrated can be practised by stepping on to a box or bench. The success of entry 2 depends on this strong push upwards. Note the position of the feet with the toes pointing downwards towards the knees of the lower partner.

Step 2

On reaching standing position the lower partner immediately transfers hands to legs of upper partner above the knees, with the exception of entry 2 where there is no hand change.

Also learn the stand on knees with partners facing, stepping up forward one foot at a time as in entry 2. This variation of the stand on knees is frequently used by women's trios in the building of pyramids (see p. 98).



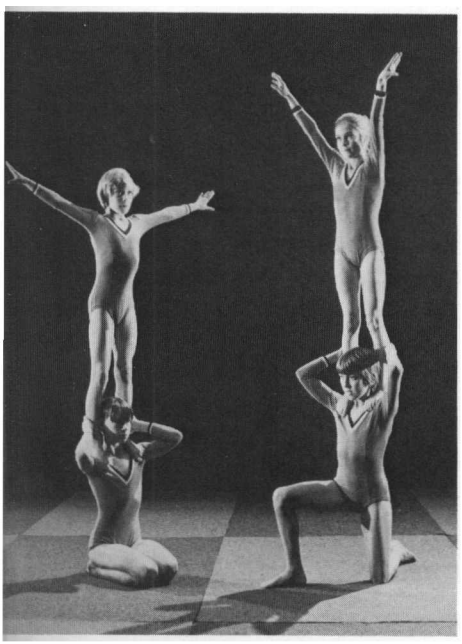
Progression

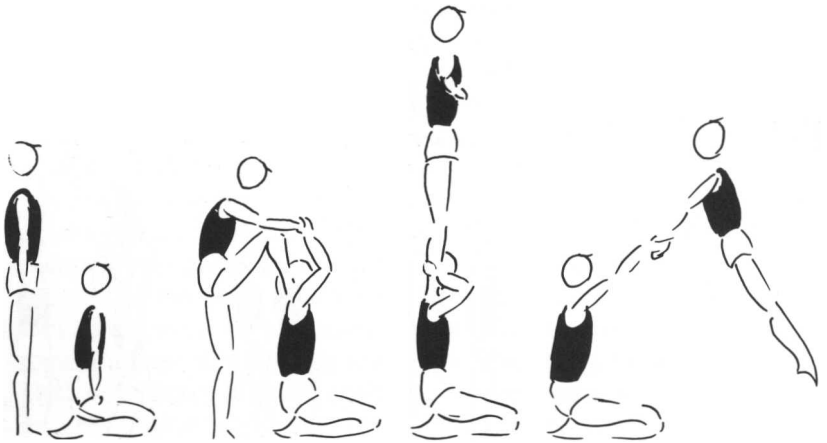
Learn the stand on knees both forward and backward without the support of the lower partner when the final balance position is reached.

The final progression is to the highest basic balance where the upper partner stands on the shoulders of the lower partner.

Balance 6 : stand on shoulders

It is important for the upper partner to understand the necessity of a quick and confident step up to the lower partner's shoulders without leaning backwards at any time. Provide a practice situation to simulate this using a box and bench as shown. The weight should be forward over the stepping up knee and there should not be a time lag between the first and second foot stepping up.





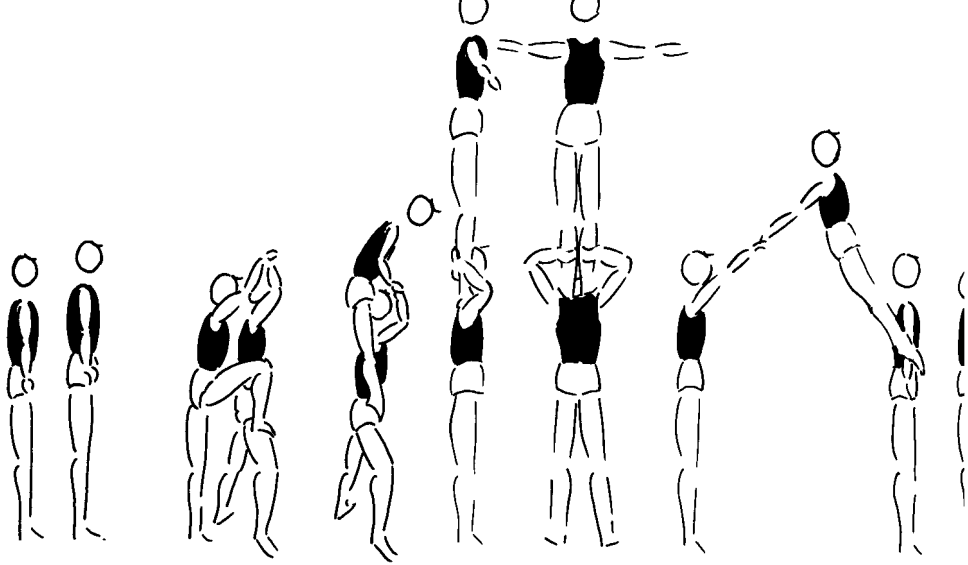
To learn the correct hold before attempting the final balance, have the lower partner krieeling down, heels underneath the seat. The pair take hands and while the upper partner steps up to shoulders the lower partner pulls the joined hands upwards and forwards. As the upper partner straightens the knees to stand, the hands of the lower partner are transferred to the calves of the upper partner, hands pressed firmly on to the calves, heels of the upper partner together and pressed down. If support is required this should be from behind the pair.

To dismount the pair rejoin hands and the upper partner jumps forward to the floor.

When the above stages have been achieved try the balance with the lower partner kneeling up, one knee raised. The upper partner uses the raised knee as the first step, bearing in mind the aforesaid points of a quick and confident step in keeping the weight over the lower partner.

Steps 1 and 2

Upper partner stands behind lower partner who bends knees. Both join hands. If the first step is to be on the right side, upper partner steps on to the bent right leg of lower partner with right foot and places left foot on left shoulder, followed by right foot on right shoulder, of lower partner. The knees of the lower partner start to straighten after the first foot is placed on the shoulder, and if necessary the feet move into the final position, which can be either astride or one foot forward. Due to the distance between the first and second steps there is a tendency to lean backwards here when learning this element, thus overbalancing the lower partner, which emphasises the need for the lower partner to pull the arms upwards and forward.



[1] *[2]* *[3]* [4]

Step 3

When the second foot is placed on the shoulder the upper partner straightens both knees to stand, releasing hands, and the lower partner takes the hold on the calves.

Step 4

To dismount the pair re-join hands and the upper partner jumps forward to the floor.

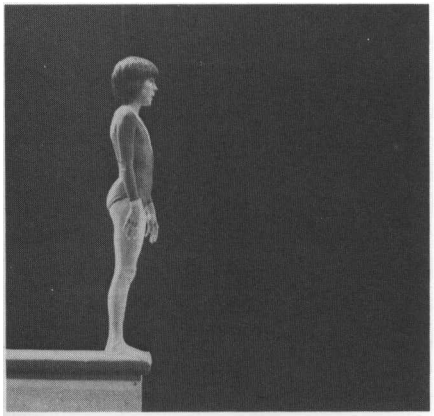
Progressions

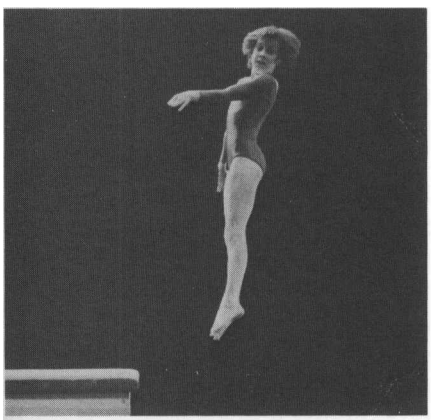
1 Stand on shoulders in final position without support.

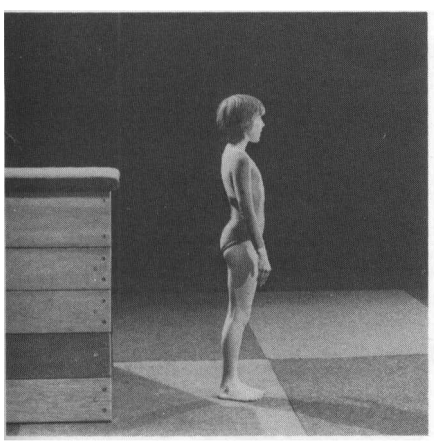
2 Upper partner stands on one leg, the other raised forward or backward, using the transfer of weight principle. The hand that supported the now free leg moves across to hold the foot of the standing leg.

BASIC TEMPO

It is essential that preparation for the tempo exercise begins early, for although the elements themselves are not beginner material and are not used in early competitions, a great deal can be done to achieve awareness in space, giving confidence to 'flight' elements. The complete elimination of fear which is achieved by a gymnast being confident in the air leads to full







commitment to the skill and thereby ensures its success. It is vital, therefore, to create many safe situations for total beginners so as to achieve this lack of fear. The availability of pits and safety mats make a great contribution, but it must be born in mind that the presence of this type of equipment should not be allowed to result in lack of concentration on producing the correct technique because the gymnast, aware of the soft landing, loses the ability to complete the movement and prepare for landing. Awareness of a confident landing contributes to the amount of commitment given by the gymnast to the element, ensuring the complete success of the skill. Coaches and gymnasts must remember that preparatory skills must be practised and taught to perfection, even though they appear comparatively easy to achieve. The ability to complete a preparatory skill with good take-off position, correct body position throughout, and secure landing is essential for the much more dynamic elements to follow. A simple skill can be successful with the wrong technique, but this will not apply to the more difficult skills. Always look for the correct technique, however simple the skill.

Practice situations for future tempo skills

Pair tempo skills involve the upper partner in a more demanding flight situation and therefore boxes and platforms are an advantage as the height can be adjusted to suit the standard of the gymnasts and the difficulty of the element.

Landings play a vital part in the sport and too often result in loss of marks because they are not secure.

1 Straight jump from the box to the mat using the feet and a lift of the arms to elevate the jump. The arms should not be taken beyond the vertical as this produces an arch in the back, particularly when preceded by a jump. This is not correct: the body should be straight and tight throughout, as tucked, piked and twisting positions required later cannot be instigated from the hollow back position.

2 Jump from two feet to pike position, feet apart, touching toes and opening out to land on the mat ensuring that the pike position is shown at the height of the jump. Also do the jump in a tuck position.

3 Jumps from two feet with ~turn and full turn to land on the mat. If arms are used to assist the twisting movement, do not allow the arm swing to move the body out of line. The arms move in to the body, not the body towards the arms. The jump must be directed upwards with a push from the feet, the body straight and tight.

4 Tempo is directed towards a situation where take-off is from a small platform, Le. hands, shoulders, or to land on such platforms and immediately take-off to the floor. Therefore direction and timing are critical. To establish simple continuity stand on the box, back to the mat, ~turn jump to land back on the box and immediately ~turn to land on the mat. Stand on the box facing the mat, full turn jump to land back on the box and immediately full turn to land on the mat.

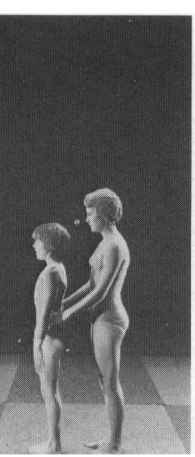
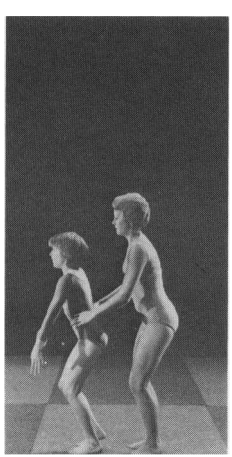
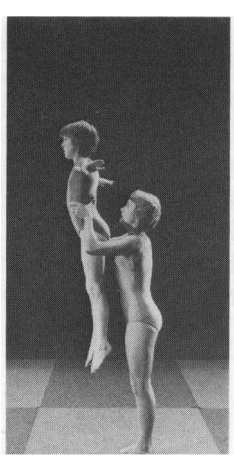
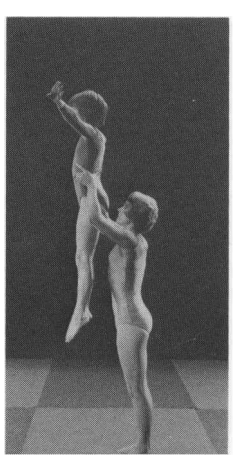
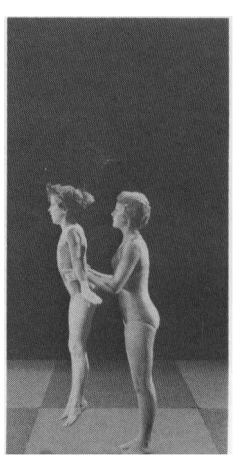
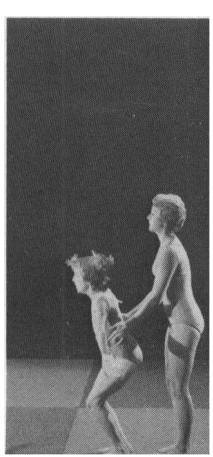
5 Use the top or the top and one section of the box, depending on the size of the performers, bearing in mind that the step should be a fairly big one. Step up to the box with one foot keeping shoulders over stepping-up leg. As the knee straightens push upwards and backwards lifting the arms to vertical to land on the mat on two feet. The second leg joins the first leg as the push is made, but does not step on to the box.

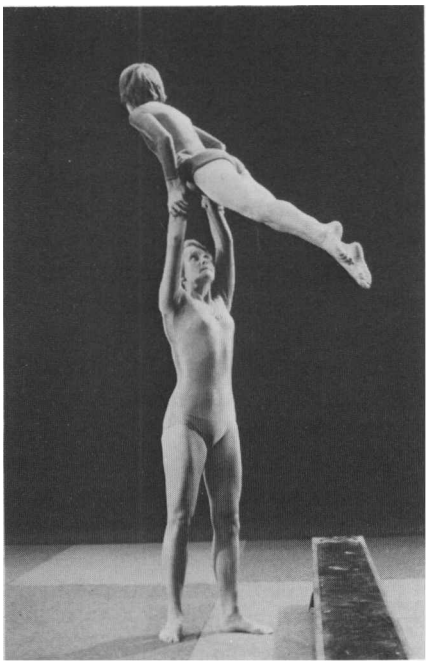
6 Proceed as for no. 5 but instead of pushing backwards make a full turn on the box immediately after the step up, the second leg being placed on the box only when the turn is completed. Jump backwards to mat. Repeat the above exercise and do a second full turn to land on the mat.

Basic tempo working in pairs

In addition to 'flight' in the air, tempo requires the pair both to co-ordinate and to support at speed, which means training the eye to follow a movement throughout and being ready to give the required support and assistance at the correct moment. This confidence and increase in speed of movement must be built up slowly and steadily, which is why it is important to start early with the preparation: thus even if there is a change of partner at a later stage, co-ordination, timing and awareness will have been achieved.

Start with simple jumps supported at the waist with the upper partner forwards and then backwards. Add to this by taking one or two steps forwards into the jump for the forward lift; for the backward lift stand facing



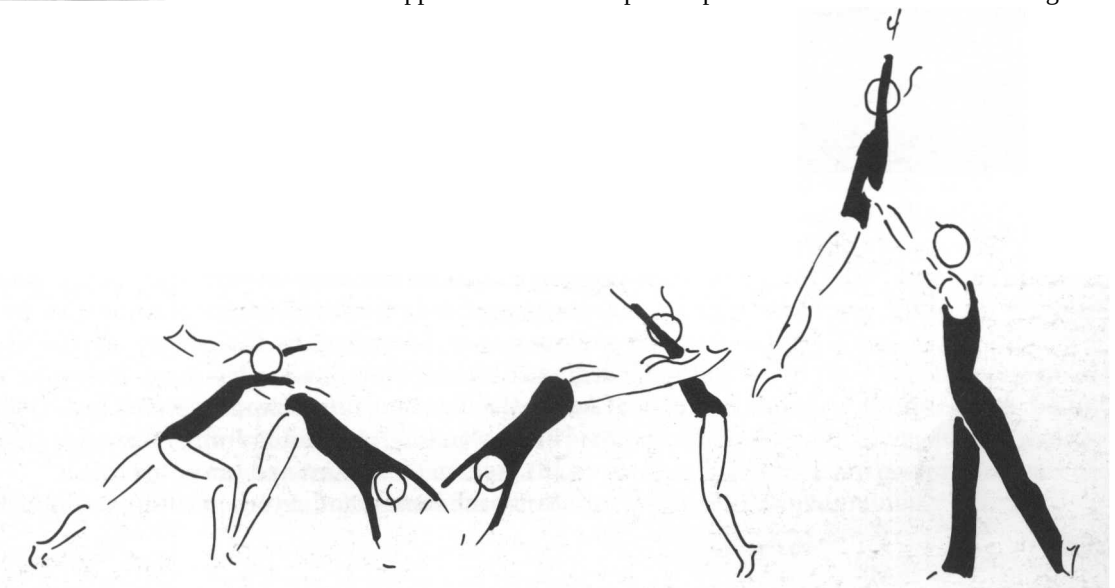
partners a little way apart. The upper partner takes one or two steps forward, making a ~turn, and immediately jumps into high backward support. There are many ways to continue increasing the difficulty, for example, have the upper partner perform a chasse (step, close, step), ~turn, jump in to the backward lift, immediately on landing both jump sideways into cartwheel.

Do the forward supported jump with a bench between the pair, the upper partner stepping forward on to the bench to be assisted to the floor in a high jump by the lower partner. The lower partner may either step backwards or make a !turn before assisting the upper partner to the floor.

One of the most difficult tempo elements is the lifting of a partner overhead from a round-off flic flac or somersault where the main problem is mostly due to the fact that the supporting partner, due to fear of the moving object, does not get close enough. Introduce, therefore, some basic elements so that when the performer has progressed to this difficulty the fear of stepping towards a person moving at speed will have been overcome, because the eye will be trained to follow the movement.

The upper partner doing a backward roll down an incline such as a spring board speeds up the roll and brings the feet in quicker, allowing the lower partner to come in close to support the waist and lift the upper partner in a high jump.

Progress to the lift from a round-off which must have a good push from the hands to a tight extended position, enabling the lower partner to step in behind for the supported lift. A round-off with no push from the hands will be difficult to support due to the piked position which results. Using a



bench for the round-off, hands on bench and land on floor, will give height and speed up the final part of the round-off. It may also be helpful in the early stages to mark the start and finish of the round-off so that the person supporting knows where the landing will take place.

Synchronisation in Pairs and Groups

The ability to work in close harmony with a partner or group applies to the whole of the sports acrobatics routine. This means that not only is team-work required in the balancing and tempo skills but that every step, leap, jump or agility is timed to match the movements of two or more people. In order to achieve this, time must be allocated within the training structure since the 'feel' for working in unison with other people is only established by giving attention to this as a specialised subject.

To attain maximum marks from a judge the standard of performance of the 'team' is what counts, not the performance of the 'individual', and therefore all members of the team must be of the same standard. No advantage will be gained from, say, a women's trio that contains two excellent performers and one weak one, because under the judging system the whole trio will be debited with the faults made by the weaker member. It is therefore very useful to do plenty of work in a class situation, sometimes in a simple formation so that gymnasts get used to keeping in time and in line with each other. Music plays a very important part and should be introduced as early as possible, as problems frequently arise when a gymnast is not able to recognise the musical beat. Also people interpret music very differently but if they are to work in complete unision the interpretation must be the same. If different interpretations happen within a pair then compromises must be made and a decision taken as to which interpretation will be used.

A good foundation for synchronisation is laid if all exercises, steps, spins, jumps and simple agilities are learned on both legs, so that when a reasonable standard of performance is reached the performers are adaptable and do not have a 'right and wrong' way of doing things. As in balance and tempo skills synchronisation can be approached in a progressive way according to the ability of the class and the following sequence shows how this can be done. Everyone must use the same leg. Change the leg at the next training session to develop adaptability.

1 From standing, one foot in front, raise arms sideways to vertical and lift high on toes. ~turn and lower to crouch.
2 Roll back tucked and return to sitting position, knees bent.

3 Extend arms sideways and bend and stretch alternate legs in time to music.
4 Lie backwards and make a! turn to front-lying, arms overhead.
5 Moving hands to front support while pushing to lift hips and sliding one leg backwards to kneel on one knee, arms stretched upwards.
6 Bring the extended back leg forward, step up and stand facing partner.
7 Supported balance in pairs, Le. arabesque or counterbalance holding both hands.

The above is a very basic selection of linked exercises which give the beginner the idea of moving from one position to another, as opposed to exercises in isolation. These can be adjusted as the class progresses by introducing additional elements when the class is ready, as follows:

Use nos. I, 3, 4 and 5 all the time.
In place of no. 2: forward roll to sitting, knees bent.
Add to no. 4: after back-lying, push to bridge.
Between 5 and 6: headstand, legs either bent or straight.
No. 7: increase the difficulty of the pair support, e.g. supported handstand.

Formations of two straight lines or two circles can be used, remembering that the two lines commence back to back, standing alternately so that the forward roll and headstand are in one line and if there is a fall in the headstand the way will be clear. The two-circle formation commences facing inwards and rolls inwards. Do not make the inner circle too small as the headstand faces inwards.

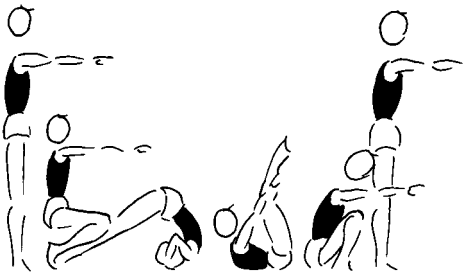
When composing links of this nature coaches should bear in mind their individual situation. The above links are designed with very little movement so that a fairly large number can be involved, but obviously if space and numbers allow more imagination can be used by introducing more movement.

It is obviously more difficult to synchronise with another person's movements such as travelling steps, leaps and the more dynamic agilities since height, length and speed have to be taken into account. Therefore simple travelling skills -leaps, turns, jumps, chasse steps and cartwheels - should be practised constantly in pairs and groups, giving the group the opportunity to adjust to one another and shorten, lengthen, speed up or slow down their individual movements to match other people. More advanced skills can be introduced into this situation when they can be performed competently, particularly when set and voluntary routines are being practised and training time is precious. Time does not always allow everyone to perform the whole of their routine, but if they are performing part of it, the main link with the partner or group will be maintained.

4 Individual Elements and Basic Tumbling Skills

All participants in sports acrobatics must learn to tumble as it is a requirement of all seven specialised sections. However, individual tumbling on the competition run differs from pair and group tumbling: in the tumbling event it consists of a series of dynamic elements performed continuously in a straight line, using only the faster agilities such as handsprings, back flips and somersaults-although the beginner cannot start with these elements and the basics of forward rolls, cartwheels etc., must be learned before building up to the more difficult skills. In pair and group work tumbling moves are called individual elements; everything from arabesque, handstand and forward roll to round-off back flip somersault is also included in this section.

Consequently, tumbling at this early stage should not be treated separately. The gymnasts should rather be encouraged to think of tumbling skills as being a necessary aspect for all performers in the development of the sport. Even when the basic preparation work has been well established, specialised tumbling is still necessary. It is only later when it becomes clear that certain individuals show a particular aptitude for tumbling that they should be encouraged to develop their skills further, and specialise in the tumbling section. The use of the specially constructed run, if available, is advantageous for all gymnasts at every level and coaches should programme time on the tumbling strip for everyone as part of normal day-to-day training.



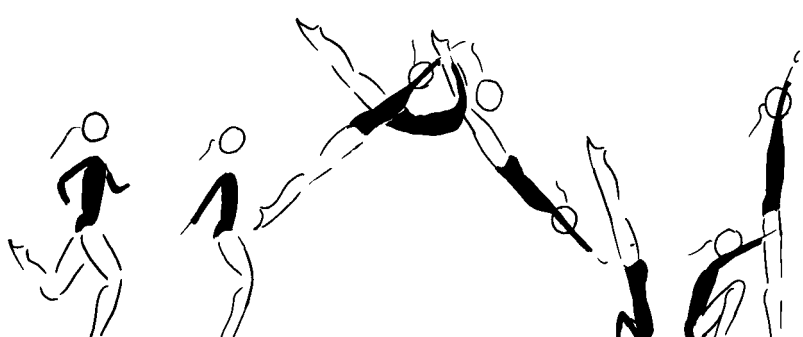
To make clear which items belong to which section all elements for both tumbling and pair and group work are graded A, Band C and are listed in a Code of Points prepared by the International Federation for Sports Acrobatics.

Forward roll

With fingers facing forwards, place hands on floor. Push from the feet to straighten the knees and lift the hips, at the same time tucking the head in between the arms to roll forward on the shoulders to stand. Extend the arms forward to stand in order to pull the shoulders over the knees and the seat from the floor.

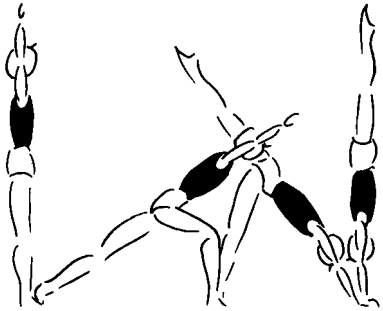
High swallow dive roll

For a more spectacular roll for display and competition, progress to a high swallow dive roll. To give the correct position do the element from a springboard to a safety mat. This situation gives height and time to extend the body in the air with arms forward and gain experience at the fast pull-in of the arms towards the floor in preparation for the roll. There must be a strong push from the feet to lift the heels and a lift of the head and upper body. Be prepared to bend the arms, tuck in the head and roll immediately the hands arrive on the floor. Diving over an object such as a rolled mat, a box top or a rope to a safety mat also helps to create the correct body position.



Handstand

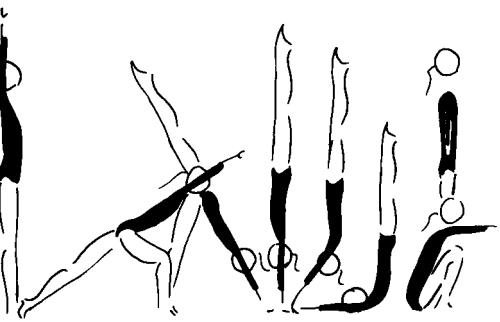
Placing the hands on the floor, shoulder width apart, fingers facing forward, kick to an inverted position. The handstand for sports acrobatics must be very straight, feeling to the performer slightly piked in order to



achieve the correct weight distribution; if the legs are too far over the head, even by only a little, the balance line will be affected by the weight of the seat and upper legs. The head affects the success of the handstand if it is pushed too far backwards causing the back to arch.

Stag handstand

The stag handstand used by females in the sport should have the legs evenly split with one leg bent from the knee. Keep the foot of the bent knee in line with the leg and do not allow it to move over towards the other leg.



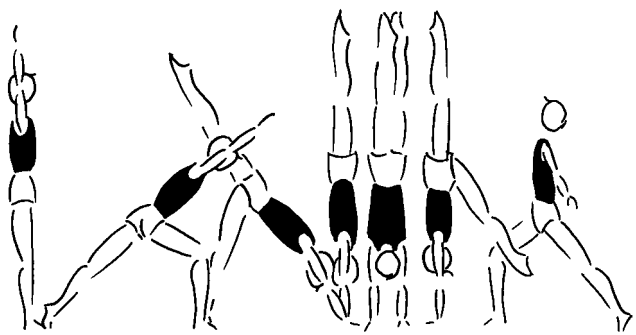
Handstand forward roll

Learn the handstand forward roll by the bent arm method. From the handstand bend the arms and tuck the head on to the chest, rounding the back to roll forward to stand. Keep the legs straight on top of the roll. bending one or both knees to stand.

Progress to the straight arm method by allowing the handstand (p. 55) to overbalance slightly, keeping the body and limbs straight, before tucking the head in and rounding the back to come to stand. Support by holding the legs of the gymnast to control the fall and tuck.

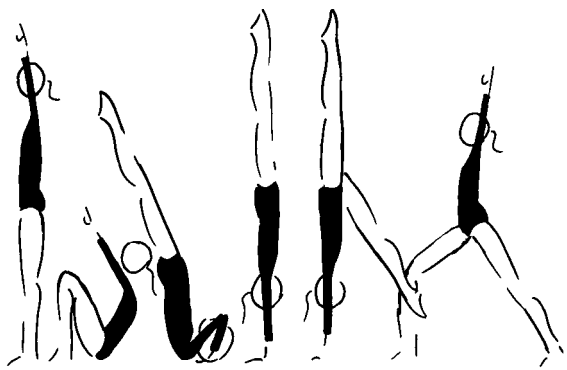
Handstand with ~or full turn

Vary the handstand by adding a **!**or full turn, moving the hands one at a time to turn the balance which rotates on the spot whilst maintaining the handstand position.



Backward roll

From crouch position roll backwards, taking both legs straight over the head. Arms are taken backwards with palms upwards and placed flat on the floor at either side of the head. When hands make contact with the floor push strongly, lifting the hips to enable the head to be lifted clear of the floor, and bend the knees to land in crouch.



Backward roll to handstand

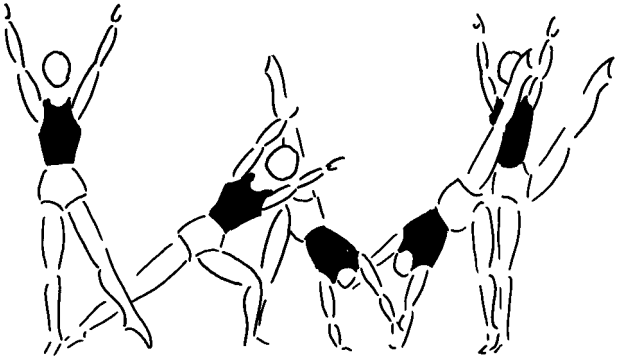
Start as for the backward roll and when the hands come into contact with the floor, push the arms straight, at the same time extending the body and legs in an upward direction to the handstand position. Do not take the legs too far over the head before pushing to the handstand. The handstand is initiated from the moment the feet are over the head. Support by holding the legs of the gymnast and lifting upwards in time with the push from the hands.

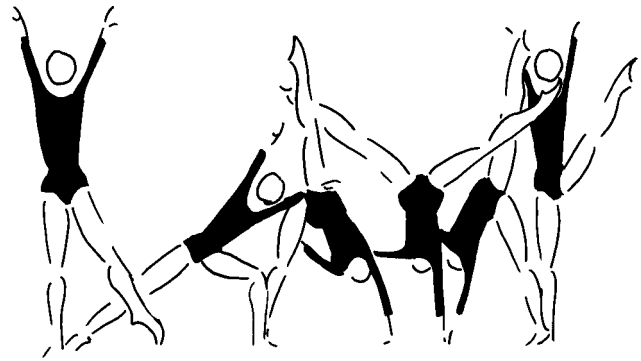
Cartwheel

This is a wheel sideways passing through an inverted position. The movement is initiated from either a step forward, which necessitates a turn of the body before the first hand is placed, or from a side stand, when no turn of the body is required. Whichever starting method is used, the hands and feet come into contact with the floor one after the other giving the wheeling action.

One-arm cartwheel

This can be done on either the first or second arm and is approached in the same manner as the two-handed cartwheel, with one hand only being

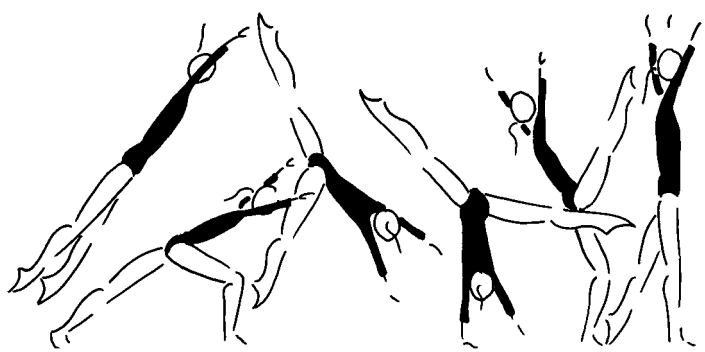


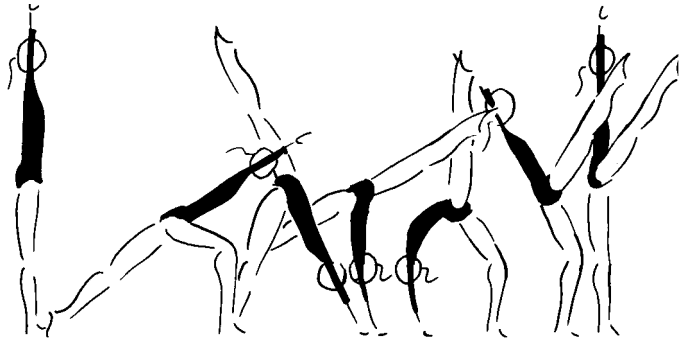


placed on the floor. Kick to the inverted position slightly quicker and stronger than for the two-handed cartwheel to keep the movement continuous and eliminate holding all the weight on the one arm. Support the cartwheels by standing behind the gymnast and holding the hips. Learn cartwheels two-handed and one-handed to both the left and right side.

Tinsica

This element is also performed with a wheeling action, placing the hands and feet on the floor one at a time, but it does not travel sideways, but forwards. Step forward as for a handstand and place first one hand on the ground then the other, the second hand being placed beyond the first, with a time lapse between the placing of the hands (if the step forward is with the right leg, then it is the right hand which is placed on the floor first). The feet are taken over the head and follow the same pattern passing through a walk-over position to land one at a time as the gymnast comes up to stand. The shoulders and hips face forward throughout the element, and if the wheeling action is to be maintained in a continuous manner the hands must not be too close together.





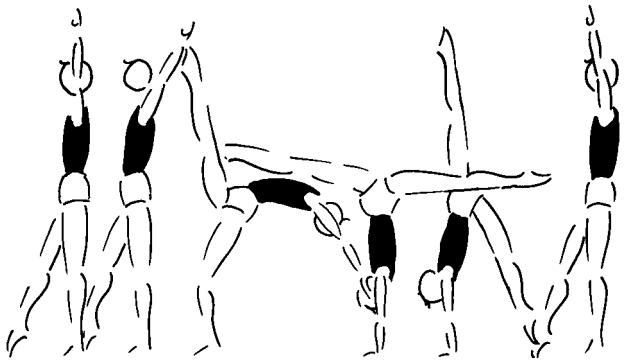
Forward walk-over

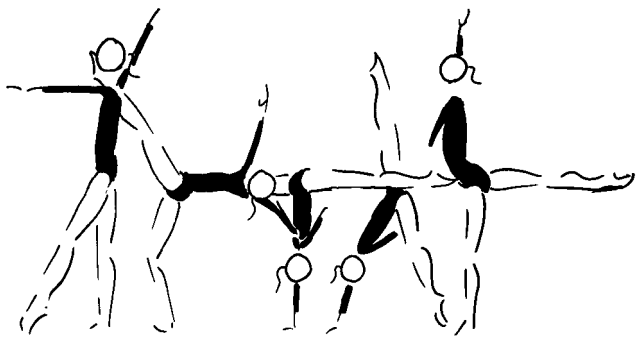
Begin as for the handstand but allow the leading leg to continue over the head to the floor. Press the leading foot firmly into the floor, heel flat, and lift the hips forward and upward to bring the upper body to the vertical.

Progress to forward walk-over changing the leading leg when passing through the handstand position, the legs showing a split position before and after the change; and to forward walk-over using one arm only; step forward with the left foot and put the right arm down and vice-versa.

Backward walk-over

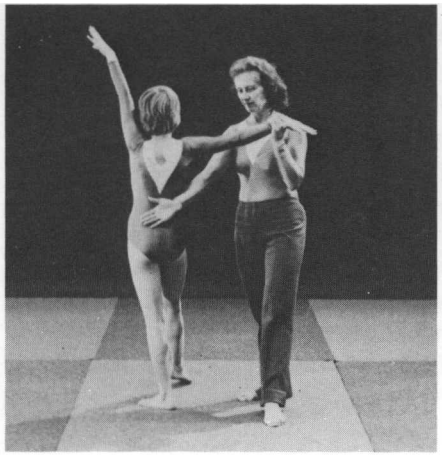
Stand with the weight on one leg, the other stretched forward, toe resting on ground, arms overhead. Keeping the head between the arms, bend the body backwards to place the hands on the floor, at the same time lifting the forward leg over the head and passing through the splits position to land on one leg. Push from the hands to arrive in standing position.

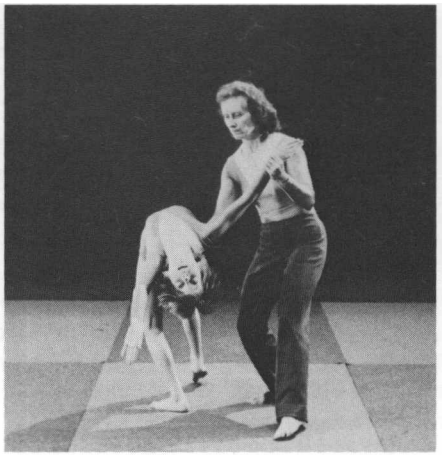


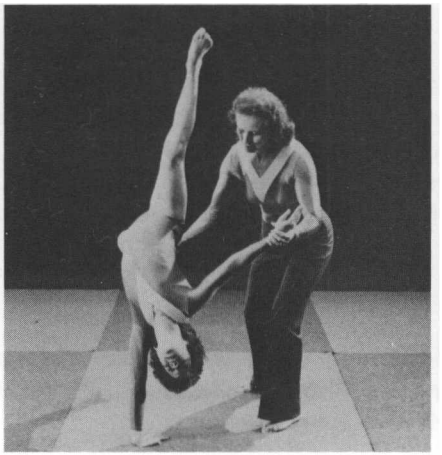


Backward walk-over using one arm

If the gymnast is to perform the backward walk-over using one arm on the left arm, right leg forward, support by standing on the right side holding the right arm with the left hand and placing the right arm across the back of the gymnast. If the element is to be successful the initial kick to the inverted position, legs passing through splits, must be a confident one in order to ensure that the body is vertical as soon as possible and the weight on the one arm nominal.

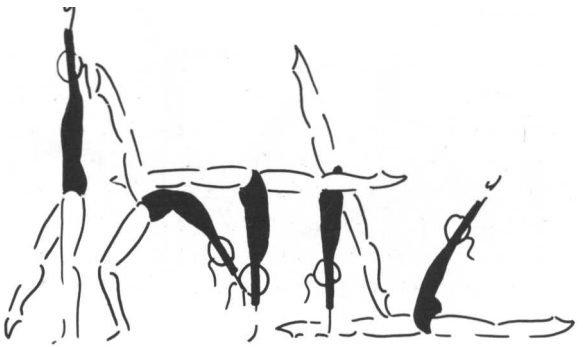


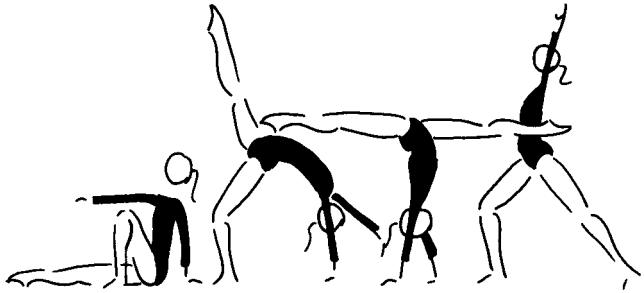




Backward walk-over cut to splits

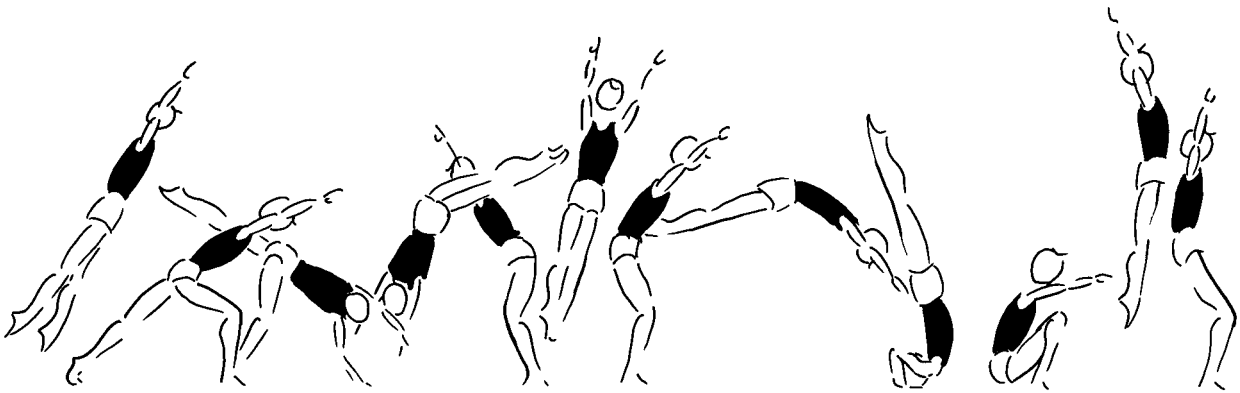
Proceed as for the backward walk-over but as the first leg reaches the vertical position the hands are pressed into the floor, the arms and shoulders fully extended, hips pulled backwards in pike position, the leading leg pulled in close to the chest to pass through the arms to the splits position. Support by lifting the hips.





Valdez

The Valdez passes through the backward walk-over position from sitting and is initiated by a strong push from the foot of the bent leg and an upward lift of the arm and straight leg to lift the body through an arched position, the second hand being placed on the floor beyond the first hand when the body is passing through the vertical. Note the position of the hand resting on the floor at the start, and the arm and the leg to lift are on the same side of the body. Support at side of extended leg and arm and lift back and leg.

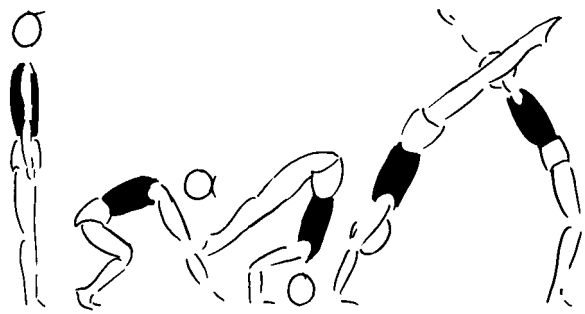


Round-off

The round-off commences with a run, the length and speed of which will be decided by the element to follow as this skill precedes most of the tumbling runs as well as being a linking element between skills of a simpler and slower nature. Immediately before take-off there is a small skip step, both legs straight, followed by a step and reach forward to place the hands. The first part of the round-off is similar to a fast cartwheel, but ensure that the arms and shoulders are forward on the skip step, and placed sideways in preparation for the round-off as the step which

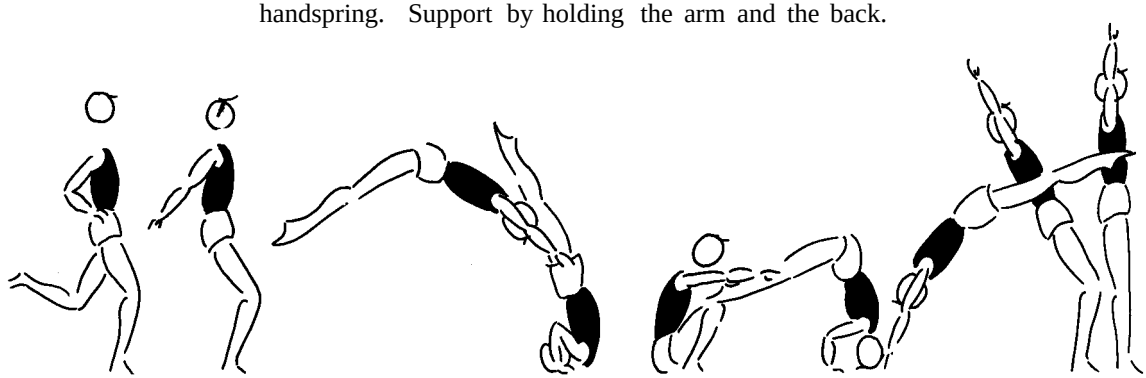
instigates the thrust is made. The legs are brought together at the top of the movement as the body makes a turn to land facing the direction of the approach run. There must a strong push from the leading leg to send both legs up to the vertical and into the turn. Hands push strongly away from the floor. Arms are lifted upwards and the body is almost upright before the feet touch the floor. A round-off which is performed too slowly and lacks push from the hands and feet will show a pike position with the feet arriving on the floor either before or just after the hands have left.

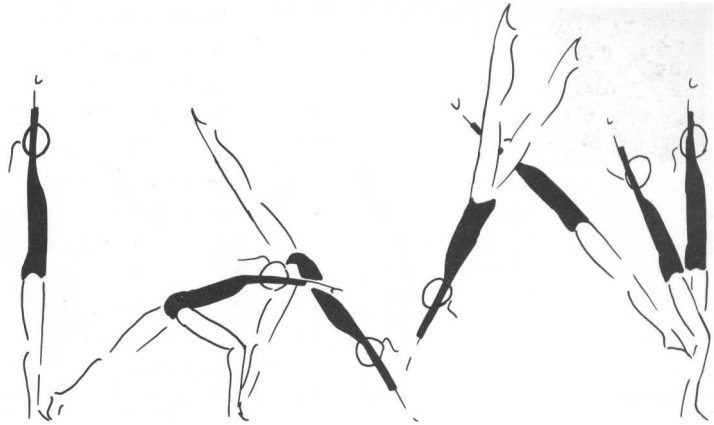
To encourage movement and continuity out of the round-off before some of the more difficult skills are learned, progress to round-off 1 turn jump, land and dive forward roll, or round-off 1 turn to land on one leg and cartwheel.



Headspring

From crouch jump from two feet, place hands and head on floor keeping the hips moving over the head through piked position. As the hips move over the head push upwards from the hands to coincide with the opening out of the body to land on the feet. This movement will have a more effective rhythm if preceded by a forward roll to crouch (as below) or a handspring. Support by holding the arm and the back.

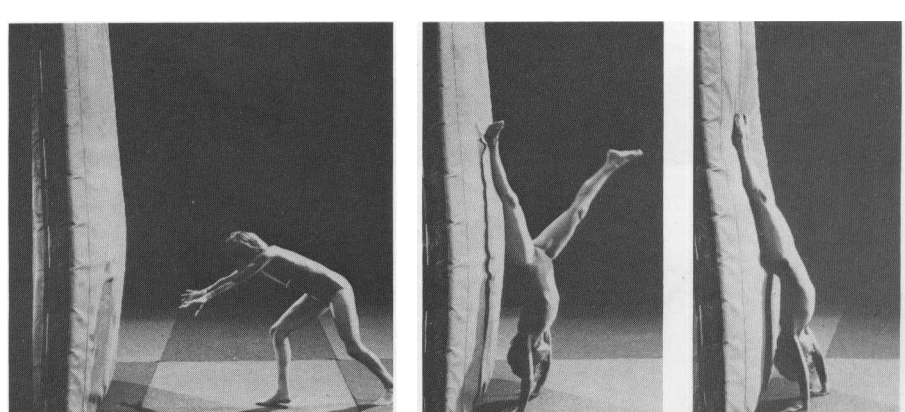


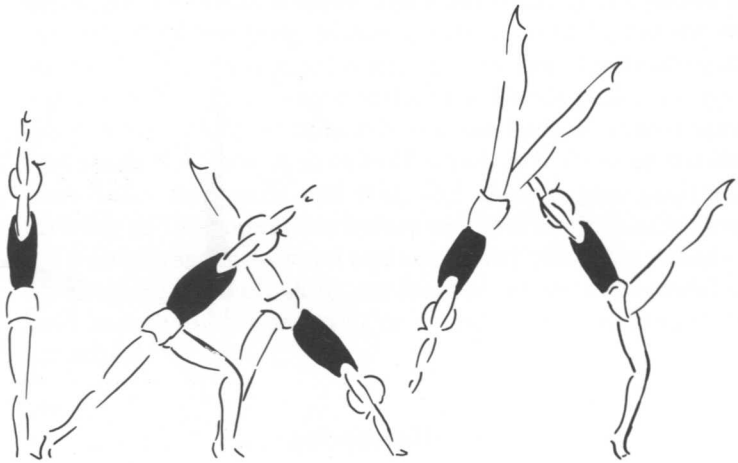


Handspring

Approach as for the round-off but to commence flight at the correct angle reach forward over the bent leg, arms stretched out, thrusting from the leading leg into a fast handstand, the legs joining together quickly (see below). The hands push against the floor to achieve complete extension through the arms and shoulders. Keep the shoulders behind the hands on take-off. The forward and upward momentum given to this element by the take-off and thrust enables the gymnast to rotate, body held very tight, and land on the feet. There should be no back arch in the handspring. Support by holding the upper arm and back.

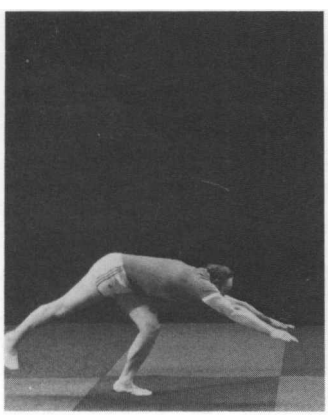
Coaches can assist the gymnast to feel the push from the hands and extension through the shoulders by supporting the fast handstand at the hips and lifting the gymnast in an upward direction until the hands leave the floor. Make sure the gymnast understands the shoulder extension by holding a supported handstand. Push the hands against the floor as the supporter pulls the legs upwards, then relax the hold on the legs and allow the shoulders to drop. Repeat.

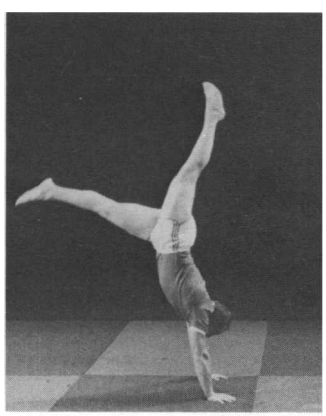


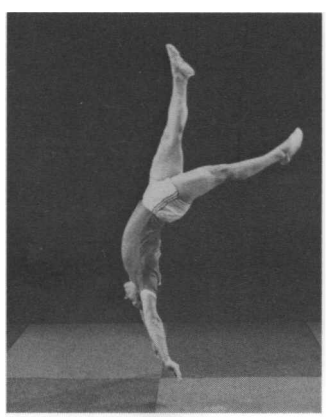


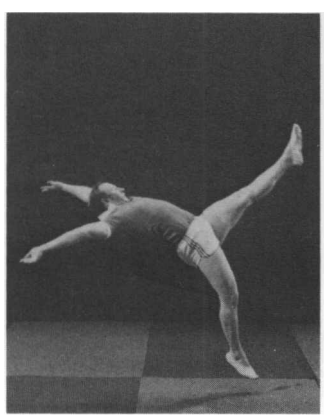
Handspring to land on one leg

Approach as for the handspring to two legs, as this handspring needs the same thrust and flight. Do not split the legs in preparation for the landing too early, or leave the second leg behind on take-off when performing this element. This slows the movement down and results in a handspring without flight, namely, a fast forward walk-over. Drop the landing leg after the thrust, holding the second leg high.



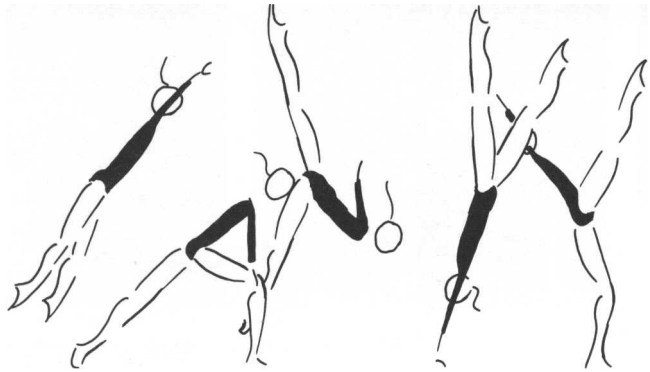






Handspring to one leg with retarded arm action

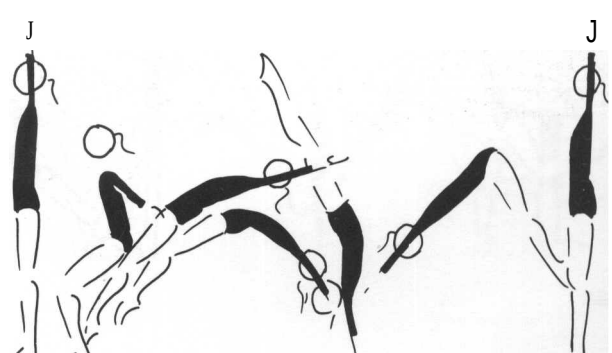
Approach as for the handspring, but circle the arms backwards and upwards as the leading leg thrusts from the floor. The backward circle lifts

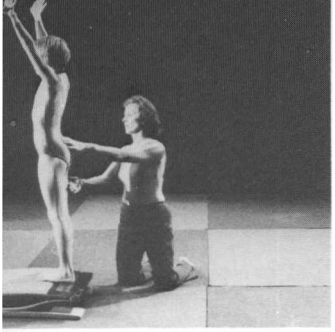


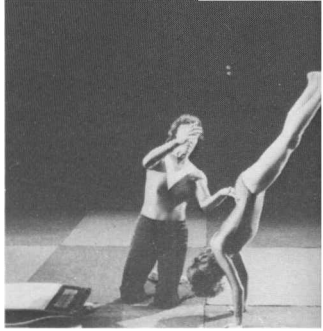
the handspring and delays the arms, giving a dive effect to the handspring which lands on one leg. The element will be ineffective if the arms circle before the leading leg thrusts out of the floor.

Back flip

Stand with feet together. Bend the knees and lean backwards, shoulders in line with hips, arms forward. When the body loses balance swing the arms upward and drive strongly from the feet, heels down. As the body rotates backwards push the hips forward and upward to pass through a momentary handstand. Push from the hands and snap both legs down together to stand. A different technique to assist the arm rotation is to swing the arms down to the sides, as the knees bend giving a more powerful arm swing in the off-balance position. If using this method take care not to allow the shoulders to move forward as the arms are brought down. A good back flip passes through the handstand position before the snap down. Very often this is missing and is usually due to insufficient arm swing, lack of drive from the heels or lack of hip thrust. It is important to ensure that the correct off-balance position with hips and shoulders in line is achieved to initiate take-off. Lack of sit back, shoulders forward or taking off from the toes will result in the back flip being directed upwards instead of backwards.

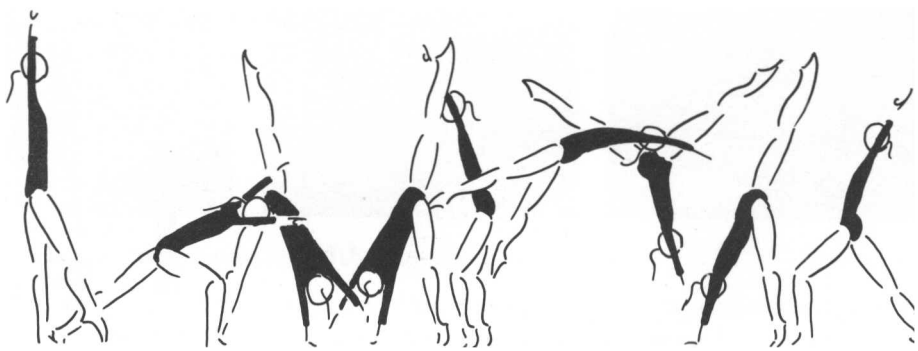




The back flip is linked to a variety of elements, the most common being the round-off and the somersault. Therefore working into and out of the back flip is of prime importance. To prepare for the round-off back flip the gymnast should practise a handstand snap-down with hands on a bench and landing with the feet on the floor. Concentrate on the arms moving upwards from the bench in preparation for the back flip which follows. To prepare for moving out of the back flip always ensure that the element is finished with a tight jump upwards, arms vertical, back straight. When both the back flip and round-off are performed competently, join the two together. If the back flip does not sit back or the hands are not lifting from the floor in the round-off, the gymnast should stand on the bench. Do the round-off with hands on the bench, feet landing on the floor and moving into the back flip. This situation will put the gymnast in the correct position earlier without so much effort and will improve the link. Doing the back flip from a raised platform-Le. mats or a springboard-will also help the technique, particularly in correcting bent arms.

Variation on the back flip used in the composition of pair and group exercises are as follows:

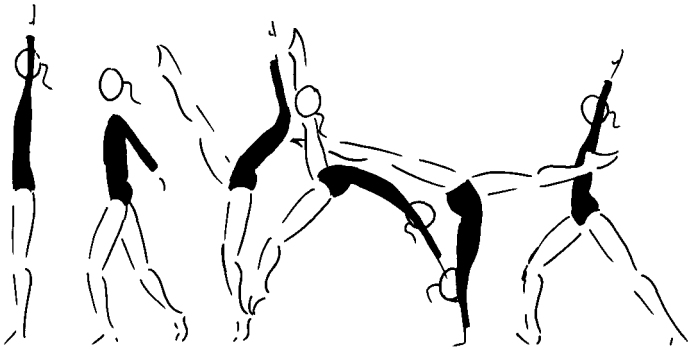


Cartwheel back flip

Cartwheel ~turns inwards, bringing the feet together one at a time; hands follow normal cartwheel line. The sit back for the back flip commences immediately the second foot is placed. Landing can be on one leg or two.

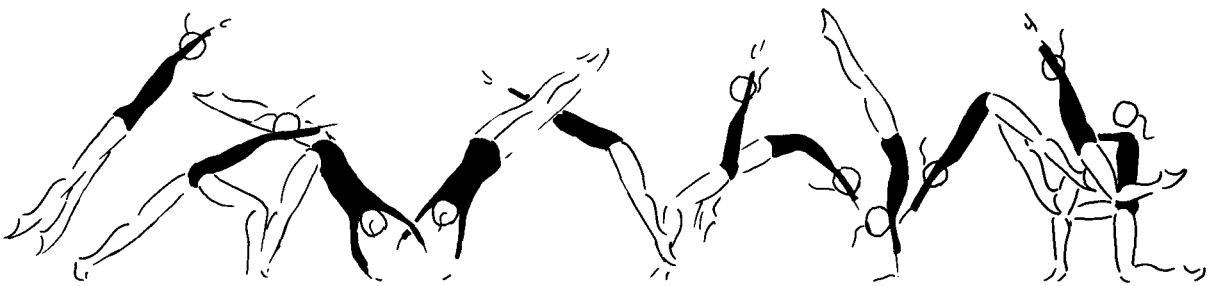
Gainer back flip

From standing step forward and throw leading leg upwards as the arms are lifted, moving backwards into a back flip to land on one leg. Lift the leg strongly upwards and over the head maintaining the hip lift. Do not allow the upper body to move backwards immediately but allow this backward movement to be initiated by the lift.



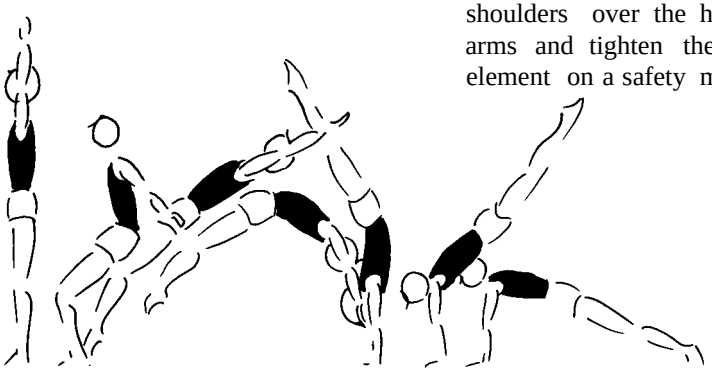
Round-off back flip to kneeling

From the momentary handstand split the legs allowing the first foot to be placed on the floor, knee bent, second leg placed backwards to give a kneeling position. Due to the speed of the element second leg must be stretched backwards before shoulders are lifted to give distance between the knees and slow the movement down to prevent over rotation backwards.



Back flip to prone

Back flip from two feet to land face downwards on ground. arms straight. body parallel to the floor. From the momentary handstand keep the shoulders over the hands and allow the feet to fall to the ground. Use the arms and tighten the body and legs to slow the movement down. Do the element on a safety mat to learn control.

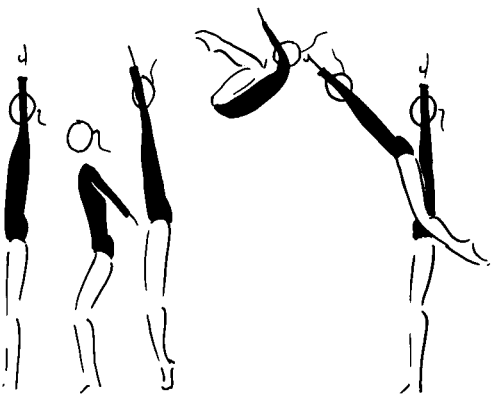


Tucked backward somersault

This element is widely used throughout the sport in tumbling sequences. as a standing individual element in the routine and in the pair and group work tempo sections. The technique of the actual somersault is the same throughout. only the approach is different.

Standing backward somersault

This somersault is learned first as it gives the technique of the somersault without the speed. It is not possible to perform this element without correct technique. whereas an element initiated by speed can be performed without correct technique by relying totally on speed to give height and rotation; therefore as a performance element this is probably the most difficult.



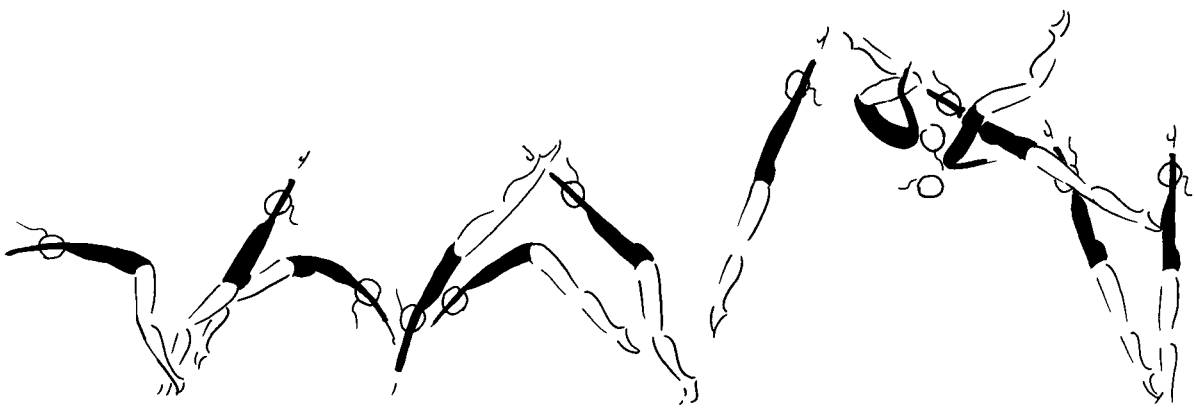
From a standing position. swing the arms upwards or downwards and upwards keeping the body tight. At the height of the lift simultaneously pull the knees over the head and the arms down to rotate backwards in the tucked position. On completion of the rotation extend the arms and legs and prepare to land.

In the standing somersault the rotation of the hips over the head before the weight begins to fall is the most important aspect. As a tumbling element or a throw from a partner the rotation is assisted by speed or lift which is why the standing element must have a strong lift of the arms upwards followed by a quick pull upwards of the knees and a tight tuck position to aid rotation. Throwing backwards will only result in a very low somersault as the knees are pulled in the wrong direction.

To learn the somersault it will be helpful to do this from a raised platform, preferably two or three firm mats. Doing the element from a greater height with correct technique will assist the pair and group work, but as it is very easy to achieve the element by throwing backwards due to the height and the amount of time allowed before reaching the floor, it is more advantageous to achieve correct technique at low level and then progress to the height. Support in the back to hold the height, using the hand nearest to the gymnast to wrap the legs over.

Backward somersault preceded by a round-off back flip

Start by doing a round-off back flip with a high jump, progressing to a tucked jump. To help the gymnast experience the correct lift from the back flip, support a standing tucked jump at the hips, ensuring that the jump is straight and tight, that the arms do not throw too far back, and that the knees are pulled up to the chest, not the chest brought down to the knees.



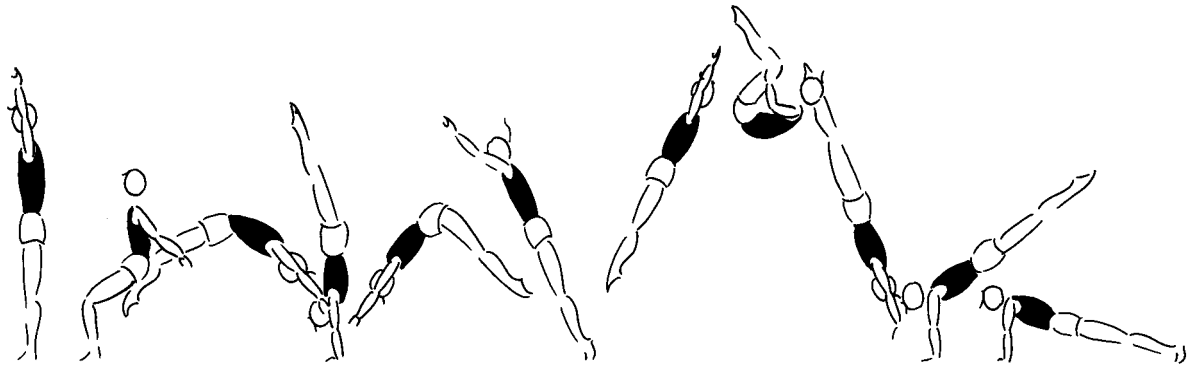
Do the element from a back flip into the somersault. Do not cut the legs in close to the hands when landing from the back flip as due to the backward momentum the arms will have passed the vertical at the height of the jump. Start the jump with the feet beyond the seat so that at the height of the jump the body will be vertical.

Tucked backward somersault to prone

Progress from the back flip to prone (p. 68) to the somersault to prone. Open the tuck out earlier so that the legs are parallel to the floor instead of vertical. The legs must shoot out to the parallel and remain above the head so that the hands meet the ground before the feet.

Back flip tucked backward somersault to prone

Join the two elements together and do a back flip tucked backward somersault to prone to upgrade the skill.

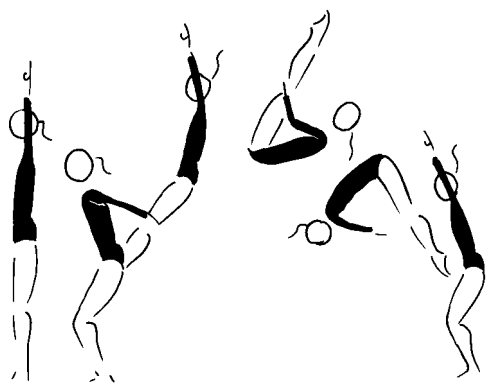


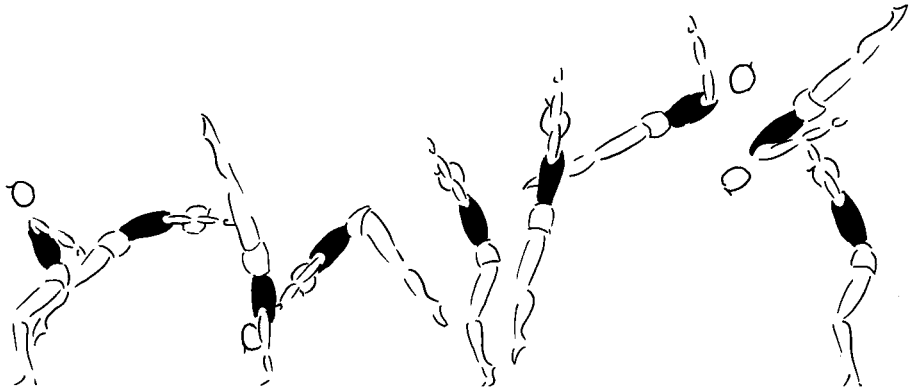
Changing the shape of the backward somersault

The tuck is the easiest type of somersault as the bending of the knees and the rounding into tuck position makes the body smaller and therefore it rotates quicker. To increase the difficulty therefore we use the pike, straight and twisting somersaults.

Pike somersault

To achieve the pike position, concentrate on the straight lift of the legs towards the face. This needs a more powerful leg action than the tuck as the pike position must be achieved in the same length of time as the tuck, but because the legs are straight the path of the feet is a bigger one needing more power and speed to achieve the result in the time allowed.



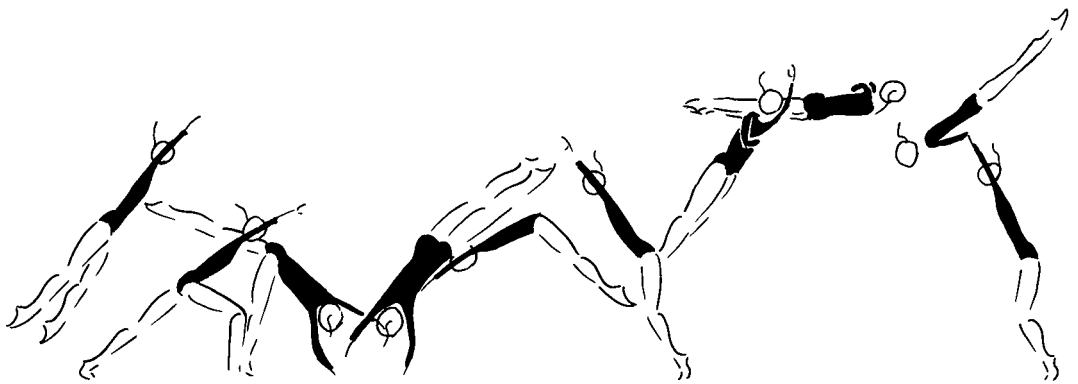


Straight somersault

In the straight back the path of the feet is an even bigger one to reach the vertical before the body weight drops. Therefore, in addition to pulling the arms down to the sides the gymnast must concentrate on lifting the chest and keeping the body very tight so that the back does not arch and leave the legs behind. In all somersaults the main purpose is to rotate the hips over the head before the highest point of the flight. In addition to the development of technique some gymnasts will need to improve their leg power to achieve these more difficult elements.

Straight somersault with a full twist

As a tumbling element the twist is usually learned when a competent straight somersault is achieved, but this does not mean waiting until this time to learn the mechanics of the twisting element, which can be learned when body tightness is present. Basic preparation should be done to create



awareness of the skill so that when the element is ready for the tumbling situation a great deal of the preparatory work has already been done.

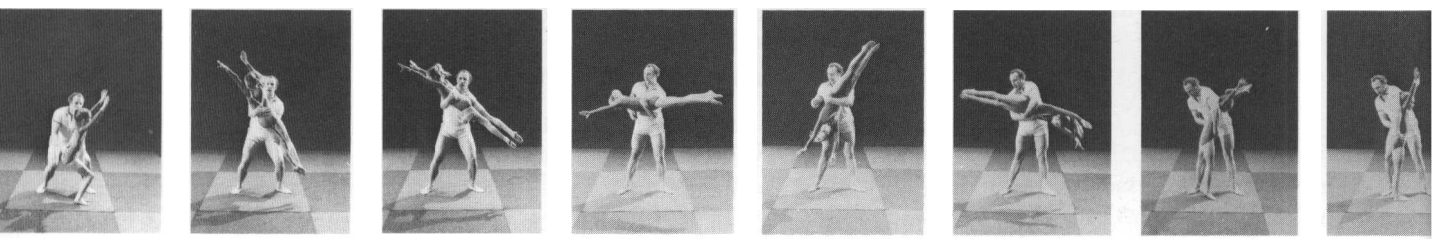
It is very important to have this awareness in the twist, but awareness is very closely related to confidence. Some preparatory work should therefore be done to establish confidence by having the gymnasts perform the path of the twisting movement alone so that awareness and confidence in what the body is actually doing in the air is being achieved. Some suggestions for preparation of the twisting element showing two different methods follow.

Method 1

In this method the path is initiated and controlled by the person supporting.

a Performer stands with back to support. ~turn jump inwards to lie across both arms, face down, and immediately supporter slips first arm to connect with the gymnast more securely around waist and releases the other arm as the body of the gymnast continues to revolve in to the second ~turn. The released arm is then placed around the gymnast as the body comes in to land.

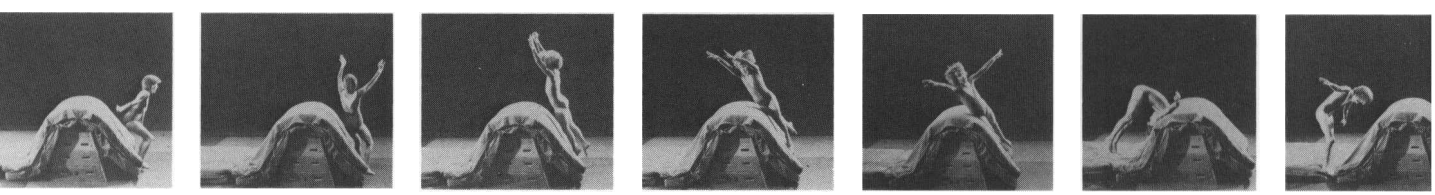
b Speed up the movement until it is ready to be preceded by a round-off or round-off back flip.



Method 2

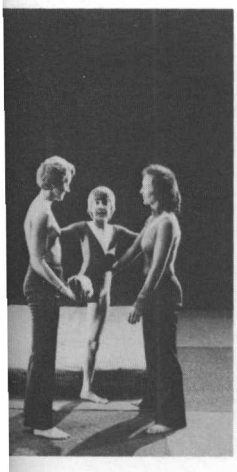
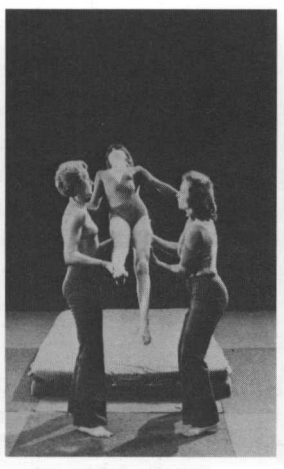
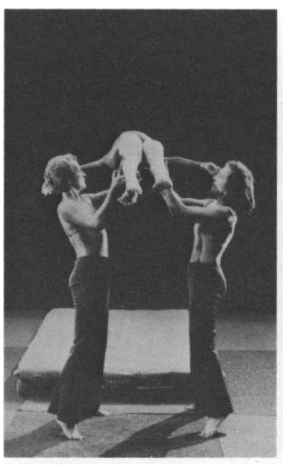
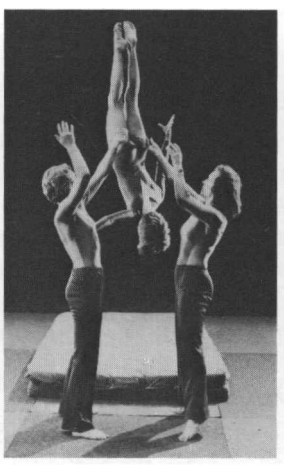
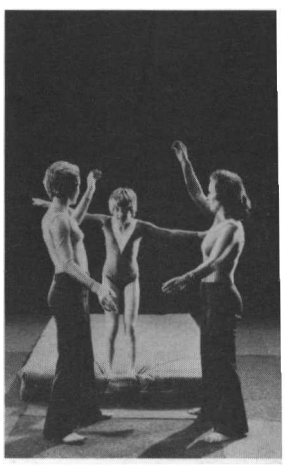
In this method the gymnast is free to perform the move in a secure situation without any manual support.

a Use a box with three sections with safety mats covering the box and the landing area. Gymnast stands with back to box. Full turn jump to land over the box, hands reaching for the floor. Bring legs over to land.



To gain confidence attempt with! turn first. If the jump is not confident and directed over the box it will be difficult to get into the correct position. This method can be used with children who have body tightness and can perform a good full turn jump on the floor.

b Add the round-off to the above when it is performed successfully with a tight full turn before landing.

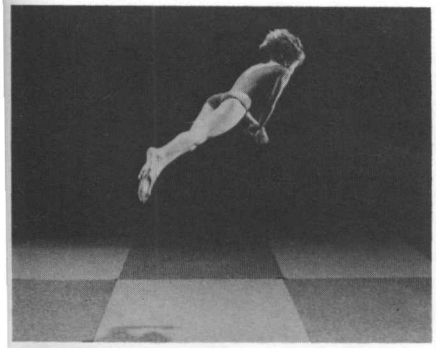






Progressive *practice*

Once the element has been learned the following practice is helpful. It diminishes stress on the arms of the coach and gives a feeling of flight to the element.

Stand two supporters, one holding the outstretched leg of the performer, the other the back, and as the movement takes off the legs also. Start with tuck and straight somersaults for confidence, introducing the ! and full turns when progress warrants this. A trampette into a pit or safe landing area can achieve the same effects.

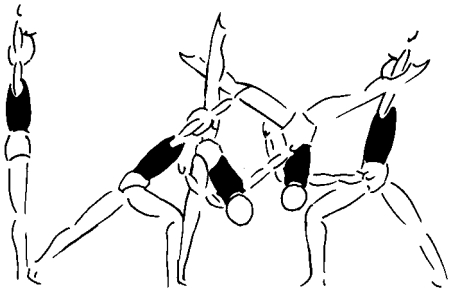
In this connection, it cannot be emphasised strongly enough that confidence in the coach and a willingness to tackle such skills depends upon the establishment of a good working relationship between coach and performer, and the coach's ability to devise secure practice situations in which the performer is happy to attempt the skill.

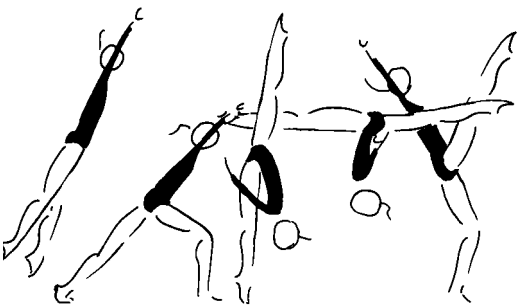


Straight *somersault with full twist using* crossed arm *action*

Barani

There must be a strong thrusting action from the leading leg, which pushes hard against the floor as the back leg lifts quickly in an upward direction to be followed by the thrusting leg. As in the somersaults, the aim is to rotate





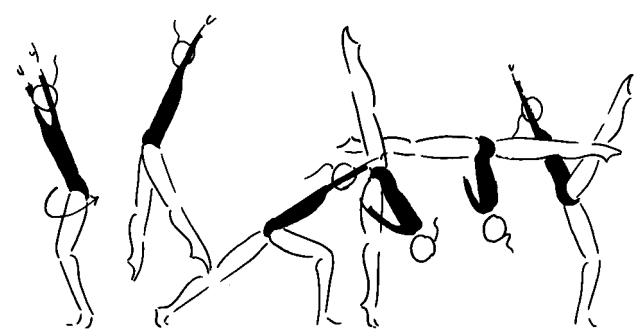
the hips before the body weight begins to drop, and therefore the leg action is a quick one. There is a ~ turn of the body as the Barani takes off to produce the sideways element and a ~ turn inwards as the first leg descends so that the gymnast lands facing the starting position. Learn the Barani from one step with assistance at the hips. A springboard or platform of firm mats will also assist by giving additional height and greater time for the element to be performed.

Free walk-over

Approach as for the Barani but keep the body facing forward. There will be a strong push from the leading leg as the arms swing downward and backwards to carry the body in an upward direction. As the legs come over the top push the hips upward to maintain the arched position. Do not lift the upper body too early, but lift quickly as the first leg lands. Support by holding the shoulder and back after the arms have swung downwards.

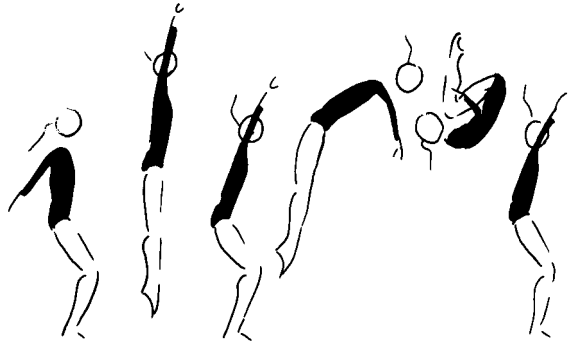
Round-off free walk-over

To increase the difficulty rating of the free walk-over progress to preceding the element with a round-off ~turn. This will need a good round-off so that the gymnast lands with the upper body vertical and straight on completion of the ~turn. The hips and shoulders must face the direction of the free walk-over, so that this will take off from the correct position. Land the ~ turn on one leg, the other leg stepping straight into the walk-over.



Forward somersault

This somersault, unlike the backward somersault, is rarely performed as a standing somersault. Therefore it is helpful to use a springboard to give height for learning purposes. From an upward stretch or jump pull the

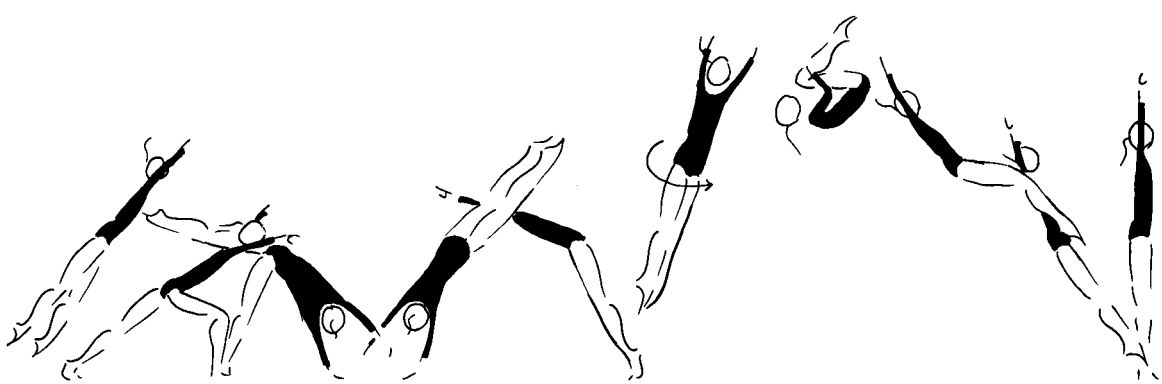


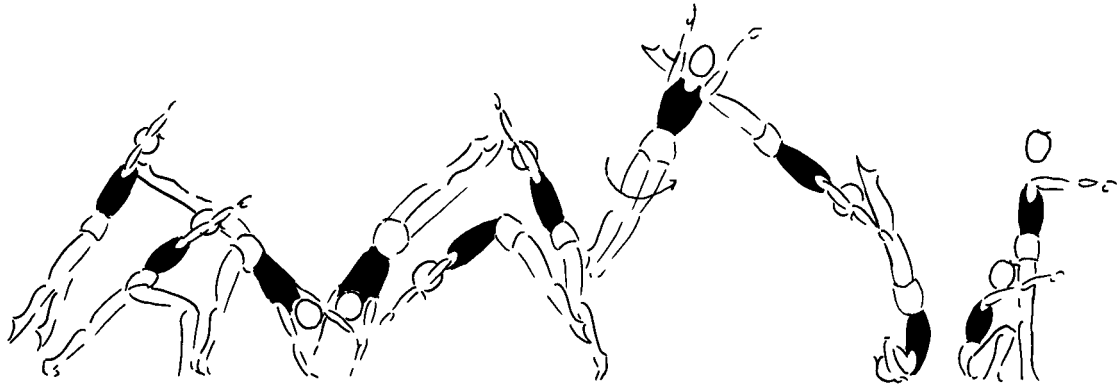
arms down to initiate the forward movement, tuck the knees up and rotate forward. When the rotation is complete extend the arms and legs to land. Do not over-rotate the somersault or it will affect the landing. To ensure a sound landing it is important to stretch the legs forward, keeping the feet ahead of the hips. Support by placing the arm nearest to the gymnast across the lower part of the body, which acts as a bar to roll over, the other arm placed on the back of the gymnast to assist the wrap into the tuck position for the rotation.

Round-off ~turn into front somersault (Arabian)

The requirements of the round-off ~turn as referred to on p. 61 still apply. In this instance, however, unlike the free walk-over, the feet do not touch the floor after the round-off ~turn before the somersault. This makes it a much more difficult element. It is important, therefore, to learn the element by doing a round-off ~turn straight into a forward roll.

Start with the single safety mat and gradually increase the height of the mats so that the forward roll has to take place in a shorter space of time and

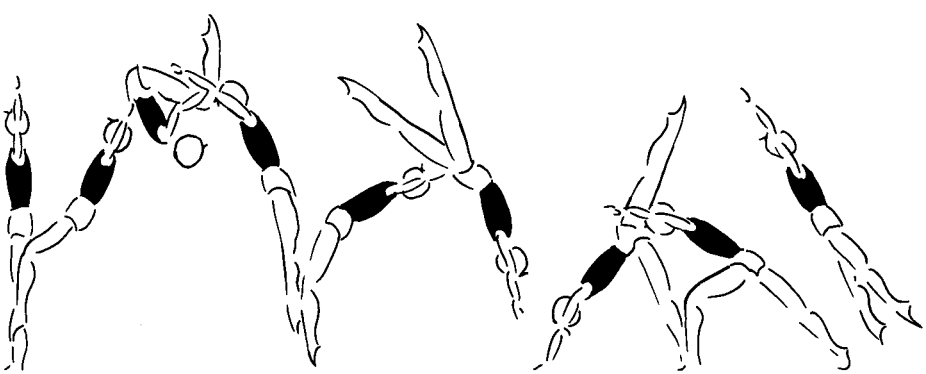




so prepare for the front somersault. When attempting the full somersault use the leg power from the round-off to extend the jump upwards into the turn, making sure that the turn is complete before tucking. A common fault with this element is to start the tuck too early before the turn is completed. The support for this is determined by the way in which the gymnast turns out of the round-off. Support as for the front somersault. If the gymnast turns to the right the support is on the right side.

Handspring front somersault

First ensure that the handspring is correct. It must land with the body slightly tilted backwards so that by the time the somersault takes off it is vertical. This means that there must be a good strong push from the leading leg and from the hands on take-off. Preparation for this element should be the same as for the Arabian, using the handspring high dive forward roll, making it a high dive roll rather than a long dive.



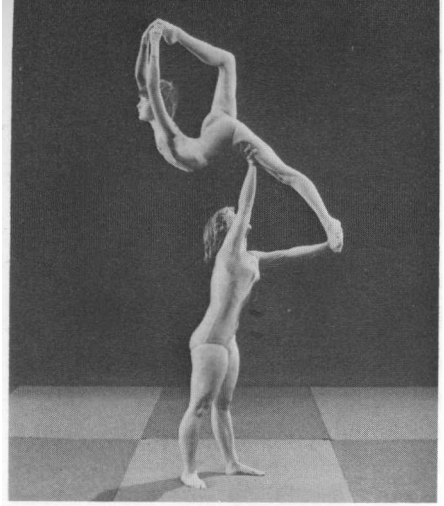
5 Specialisation

Progression from Basic Preparation

The training of basic preparation for all sections continues until all aspects are learned and performed with the correct technique and body tightness. After this period if it is desirable to gain competitive experience the British Amateur Gymnastics Association has a development plan which caters for competitive sports acrobatics at different levels up to international standard and would-be competitors are advised to take part. In addition club, inter-club and regional competitions should be entered. Alternatively, to have some official record of progress there is a British Amateur Gymnastics Association award scheme which offers badges and certificates for reaching certain standards. If display work is to be undertaken, experience in team situations at club level should be gained as often as possible. However, recreational sports acrobatics can be the source of much enjoyment and pleasure for many gymnasts.

When competitive experience has been gained at a basic level then specialisation in one of the sections should be considered. At this stage preparation should continue but it should become more individualised with the accent on the specialised requirements of the gymnasts in relation to the role played in the sport.

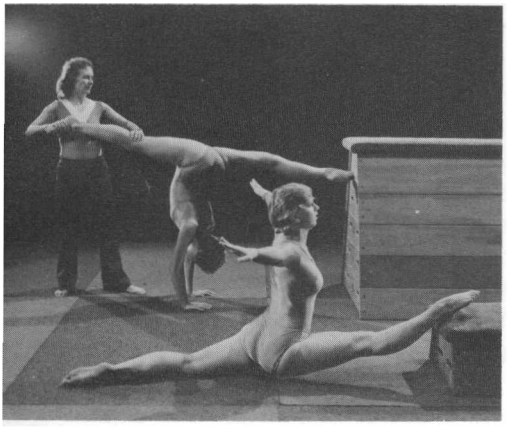
After completion of basic training and experimentation in various pair situations the decision to concentrate on one particular aspect of the sport will be made, remembering that considerable pair work should be done before becoming involved in the group events, particularly men's four. Although very similar techniques apply throughout the sport the skills in each group and the content of the competitive routines differ, mainly due to the different strength levels of male and female participants. A group of three or four men or three women will perform very different skills to two women, due not only to strength but the fact that there is more than one person supporting, allowing higher pyramids to be built and different ways of achieving tempo skills. The following sections describe some of the skills applicable to a specific pair or group and also show how pair work leads to group work.



Women's Pairs

The upper partner in the women's pair section needs to be very supple in the back and legs in addition to having the required tightness. Therefore, concentration should now be given to further advancement of the exercises shown in the section on basic preparation (p. 20) and on p. 25, using the bench.

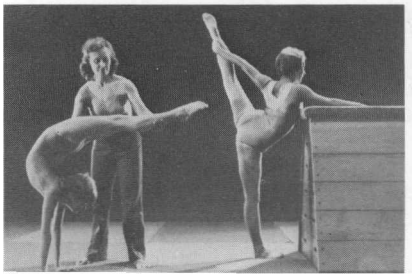
The lower partner must continue to develop the strength for lifting and supporting the upper partner without moving the feet, using weights, a ball, or any object which simulates the upper partner as outlined on p. 27. The eye training procedure must also be continued by following every movement of the upper partner throughout the balancing and tempo skills, so that the lower partner can not only be in the right place at the right time but can develop a feeling of unison, with the pair working together as one person to show complete synchronisation, not only in dance and tumble elements but in all the skills throughout the routine.

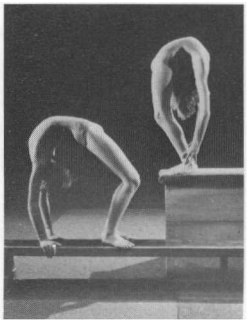


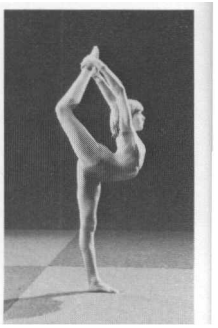
Practice situations for the back and legs

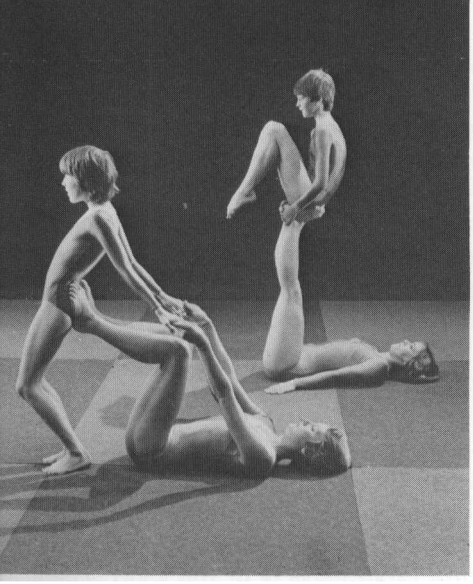
A split position on the floor is not sufficient as it is by pressing the legs into the floor that the position is achieved. What we are attempting to achieve is a free split position either by holding the leg forward, backward or sideways or in a handstand. One suggestion for achieving this is shown on the left.

Natural back suppleness and good body tightness do not usually go hand in hand and when a gymnast has an extremely supple back she will not need to spend the same amount of time on back suppling as a gymnast with an average or stiff back. However, she will need to supplement this training with extra work on body tightness and back strengthening in order to control the excessively supple back. In the same way the person with an average back but good body tightness will have to work on this aspect of back suppling. Thus, when specialisation in this sport takes place attention must be given to the requirements of each individual, who should have his or her own training programme. A subject which is often overlooked when assessing back suppleness is the shoulder. This, rather than the back, is often the cause of the problem and should be worked on accordingl y.









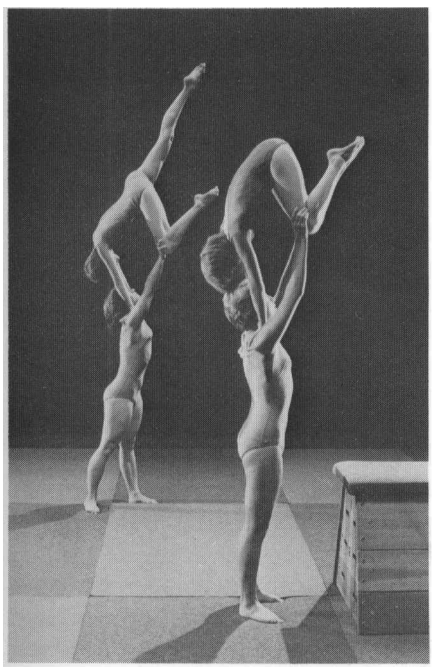
PROGRESSIVE BALANCES FOR WOMEN'S PAIRS

Progress from stand on shoulders with one leg raised forward or backward (p. 48) to upper partner supporting one leg high sideways. Increase difficulty rating still further by both partners holding one leg high sideways, both using the same leg.

Progress from 'V' sit on bench (p. 26) to 'V' sit on partner's feet. Note that the feet of the lower partner are placed low on the seat of the upper partner so that when the lift is completed the upper partner will be in the correct balance position in the centre of the feet. The sit on the centre of the feet allows more control of the balance as the toes and heel are free for any necessary adjustment. This position also gives the upper partner freedom to move the seat forward or backward to achieve the correct position without overbalance occurring.

Lower partners are reminded that in all positions of this nature the knees are over towards the chest with the heels above the hips before straightening the legs, and in the final position the legs are vertical.

Supported knee balance

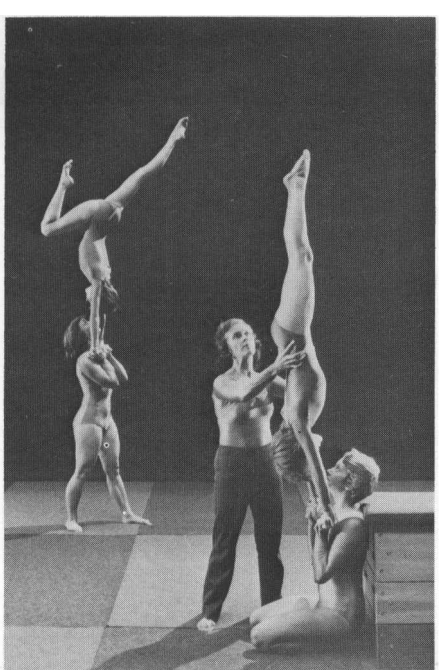


This balance is a bridge between the more advanced lifts tu handstand and the basic balances already learned in providing a more challenging element for the upper partner who is almost in the handstand position on a standing base, and giving the lower partner a chance to perform a more complex lift and support.

To minimise the lift and give the correct final position, stand the upper partner on a box with the knees at waist height to the lower partner with hands on shoulders of lower partner. Lower partner takes hold of upper partner just above the knees and lifts upward to a straight arm position, arms almost vertical. Legs of upper partner are bent backwards from the knees. Immediately arms of lower partner are straight, upper partner extends one leg to vertical; at the same time lower partner extends the free arm sideways. The decision as to which leg is to be extended is made by the upper partner before commencing the balance and this determines which arm will be released by the lower partner.

Progress by lowering the box gradually, noting that as the upper partner gets nearer to the floor it will be necessary for the lower partner to bend both knees to support the upper partner in the correct position. The upper partner must time the take-off with the lift from the lower partner by slightly flexing both knees and pushing from the feet.

Note the straight back position of the upper partner, which is maintained



throughout the lift. An arched back on the lift will make the balance very difficult for the lower partner. When doing the final balance with the upper partner standing on the floor the feet of the lower partner are more stable if placed one in front of the other with the balance of the pyramid distributed between the two feet.

When the balance is very secure increase the difficulty rating by having the lower partner slide to a splits position. Lower partner should have practised the slide to splits with an object as illustrated on p. 28. A further practice situation for the lower partner sliding to splits is with the upper partner standing on shoulders.

Pair handstand

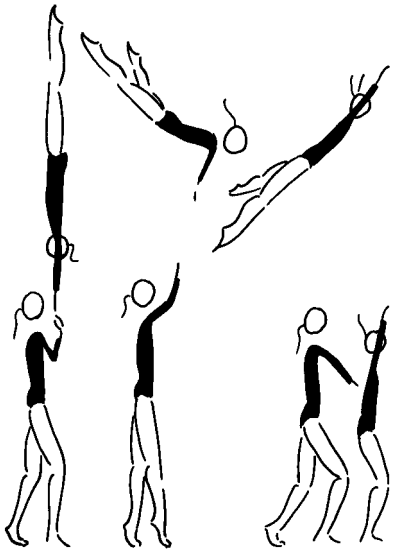
The handstand from the top of the bench (p. 27) illustrates the reduced area available between shoulders and hands. The approach to this balance differs according to the strength of the pair, since although this is a women's pair section this balance occurs in all aspects of the sport. The women will find it easier if the lower partner turns the hands backwards and keeps the forearms close to but not touching the shoulders. This keeps the upper partner more in line with the lower partner and makes control of the balance easier. The men will rely more on the strength of the arm and hold the balance with the forearm further away from the body. In the women's pairs it is an advantage if the suppleness of the legs of the upper partner allows the first leg to lift to handstand before the second leg leaves the shoulder, making it unnecessary for a strong kick to handstand which knocks the balance out of alignment, causing overbalancing.

Have the lower partner kneeling on the floor for a practice situation which takes the upper partner through the correct element.

First attempts with the base standing can be made easier by allowing the upper partner to kick from the box placed longways behind the lower partner. A ~turn to land can be practised from the top of the box prior to learning the whole skill so that the upper partner can dismount safely.

Support the full element with the rig or a box at the required height. If the balance is as straight and tight as it should be before the element is attempted, then if it over-rotates it will be easy for the upper partner to ~ turn to the ground still keeping the hand hold with the lower partner. Alternatively, if it under-rotates the upper partner will drop to the ground behind the lower partner.

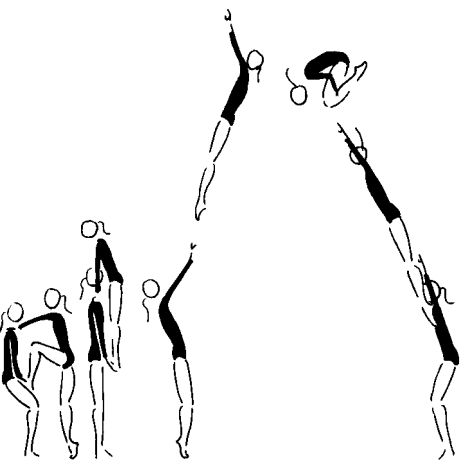
The lower partner must make every effort to keep the balance perfectly still; if any corrective movement is necessary she must move the body from the knees, keeping the trunk straight without moving the feet.



Handstand courbette

To give a good exit from this balance, which also qualifies it for the tempo routine, do a straddle forward to the ground. Perform the handstand as above or with a jump or lift from two feet. Immediately on reaching the handstand the lower partner slightly bends knees and giving a slight rebound pushes the handstand in an upward direction. At the end of the slight push, as the lower partner straightens knees, the upper partner pushes from joined hands and lifting upper body straddles forward to the floor, landing with back to partner. If the straddle occurs before the lift of the upper body the tendency will be to dive head first to the floor. The straddle position can be felt by the upper partner from the end of a box or on a beam, but the timing of the element is in fact easier if done with the partner, due to the rebound and push given from below. The supporting rig or a belt would therefore be the best method.

TEMPO ELEMENT



Backward tucked somersault from a throw

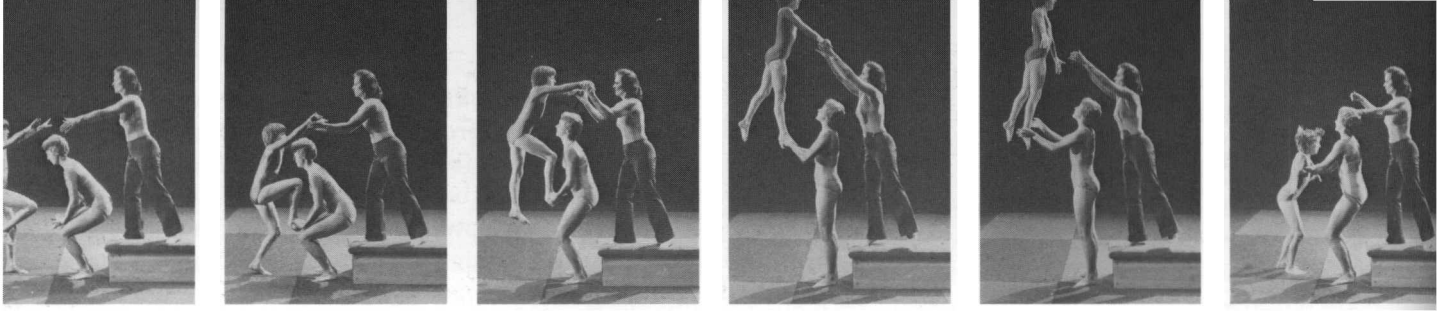
The step up to the box and jump backwards (p. 50) is a preliminary to this movement in an endeavour to erase the most common fault which occurs in the performance of this skill, Le. throwing backwards too early, due to the upper partner not keeping the shoulders over the stepping-up leg nor reaching upwards over the lower partner's head. A well-executed tucked backward somersault should be learned by the upper partner on the floor and from a small platform before attempting this skill (p. 68).

Step 1

The upper partner learns the correct step-up with the weight over the stepping-up leg and the feet joining together before jumping back using the box. Make sure the box is approximately the same height as the lower partner will be when in position.

Step 2

Lower partner learns the correct stance and uses hand hold (p. 40). With feet apart, bend knees, moving them in towards each other to make a platform, hands resting on knees, back straight. This gives a firmer base for the upper partner and enables the lower partner to lift the upper partner more easily as the hands are supported and cannot drop too low when presented with the weight of the upper partner.



Step 3

Join steps 1 and 2 together, the coach supporting the waist of the upper partner as she travels backwards to a safety mat. Note that the hands of the upper partner are placed on the shoulders of the lower partner as she steps into the hands. The body position of the upper partner must remain straight and tight as she moves backwards. The supporting rig can be used to give the upper partner confidence for the high lift required, but if this is not available, the problem of the upper partner moving backwards too soon can be overcome by the coach standing on an object behind the lower partner and joining hands with the upper partner as she steps upwards, which encourages the use of the arms. This eliminates the fear of falling over the top of the lower partner since it allows the upper partner to complete the stand, as the coach does not release the hands for the lift back until the correct standing position is reached. It must be fully understood that the lower partner cannot perform the correct lift without an upward-moving, light, confident step from the upper partner.

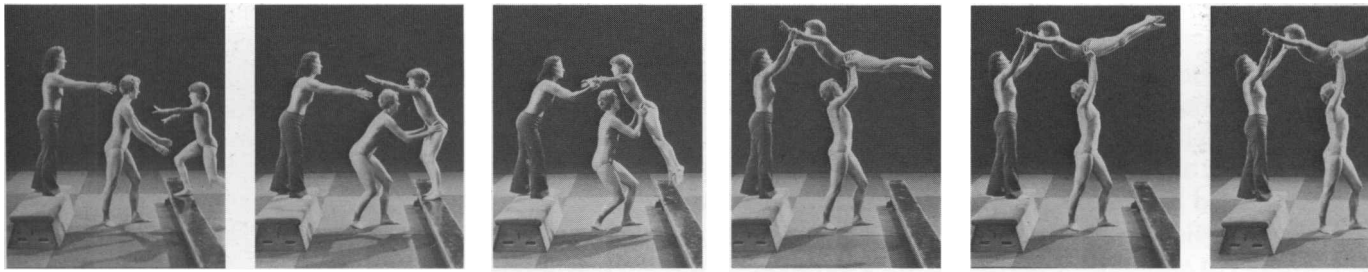
Step 4

The backward tuck. The upper partner should first attempt the whole movement from the top of the box with either rig or support from the coach as for a stationary backward tucked somersault. The coach supports in the back, wrapping the legs over as the somersault occurs, moving both hands in to the waist for the landing.

Progress to attempting the complete element with both partners, using the same methods of support.

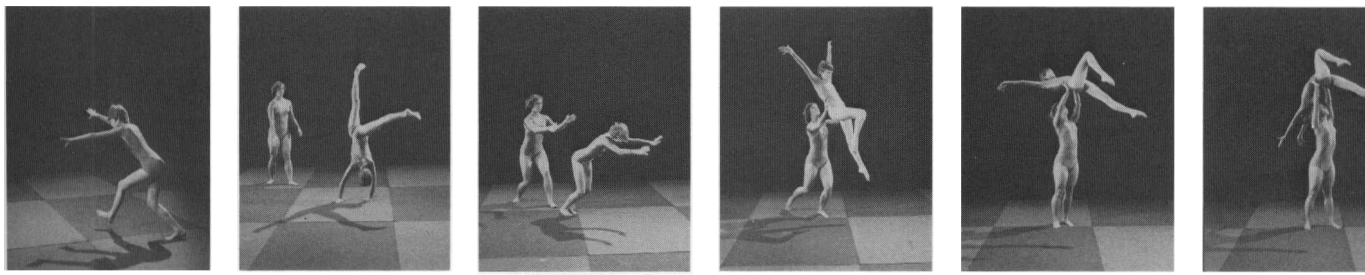
The hands of the lower partner are drawn inwards towards the body, arms bent, for the lift, and continue to rise vertically upwards in line with the body.

Avoid pushing the hands away from the body. The lower partner should also ensure that the feet are firmly pressed into the floor with the weight evenly distributed. Note that the landing should be supported by the lower partner.



Forward angel

This element is used in many balance and tempo skills and a good practice situation is to use the bench to assist the lift, with the coach standing behind the pair to give confidence for the lift overhead.



Round-off or round-off back flip to back lift or backward somersault overhead

A well-executed round-off or round-off back flip, followed by a straight high jump, should be learned by the upper partner before attempting this skill, in addition to the basic preparation by the pair for this element (p. 51).

Back lift

Step 1

It will help the lower partner to develop confidence in moving towards the upper partner if the round-off, or round-off back flip, is marked out so that some idea of the landing position is established. The upper partner will need to do a great deal of practice of straight jumps from the round-off or round-off back flip to give the lower partner the necessary practice at supporting the jump just below the waist. If the round-off or round-off back flip lacks push from the hands to the feet or is too slow,

the body shape presented to the lower partner for the lift will be piked with the leg angle making it impossible for this partner to get close enough until it is too late.

Step 2

Total commitment is necessary from both partners to achieve the correct timing. In lifts of this nature it is of no value to the upper partner if the lower partner does not take hold until the jump has reached its height and has started to drop. Similarly, it is of no value to the lower partner if the upper partner does not commit herself to the high jump until she feels the grip of the lower partner, as the momentum for the jump will have been lost. Supporting in the right place at the right time makes the performer more aware of the element and the supporter does not have to carry the full weight during the lift.

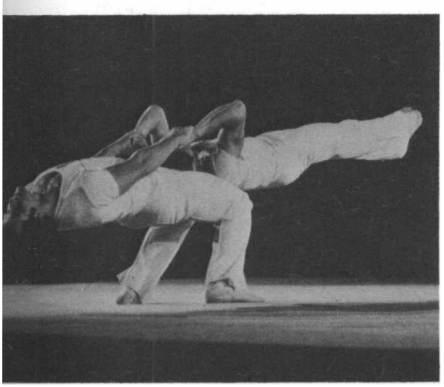
When contact with the lower partner has been made, the upper partner continues the upward movement with the arms overhead, arching the back as the peak of the jump is reached. There should be enough backward momentum from the tumble to take the movement overhead without arching the back too early, as this will cause the movement to go straight backwards instead of upwards and backwards, and make it impossible for the lower partner to lift to a straight arm position overhead.

Backward somersault overhead

The initial take-off is the same as the back lift with the tuck taking place at the height of the extended jump. The technique for the tuck is the same as a tumbling element but with a delay between the stretched jump and the actual tuck, to allow for the lift.

The function of the lower partner differs in that instead of holding the partner she will be pushing her overhead. Therefore, the hands will be placed for maximum push in the lower back in order to ensure rotation of the hips and legs at a height sufficient to allow for the straight arms of the lower partner and the opening out and landing of the upper partner.

On completion of the push and when the upper partner has passed overhead and is opening out to land, the lower partner turns to support the upper partner in landing by joining hands.



Men's Pairs

Body tightness and suppleness are vital requirements because of the content of the competitive routine. The lower partner will eventually be required to perform a considerable amount of movement whilst holding the upper partner in, say, a one-arm handstand. If he is not supple it will not be possible for him to move about without affecting the line of balance of his partner. In a similar way if the upper partner is not sufficiently well prepared it will be impossible for the lower partner to continue to control the balance through a difficult exercise.

The difficult and sustained elements of the men's pairs and groups make it essential for intensive preparation in the early stages of training to ensure success and eliminate the most common cause leading to loss of marks, that is lack of body tightness and extended limbs. Extended arms and legs are not required for style alone, they are a necessity for the tight body position required.

BALANCE ELEMENTS

Handstand

As the upper partner is required to perform the handstand with the lower partner in various body positions it should be practised in this manner so that the upper partner becomes able and confident whatever the base position. In addition to practising the pair hand-to-hand balance with the lower partner vertical (as given in the women's pairs section), practise with the lower partner horizontal. Start with the lower partner in a bent arm position and progress to the straight arm position.

Step 1

Handstand by upper partner with lower partner lying horizontally on floor, arms bent, forearm vertical, elbows on floor close to body.

Step 2

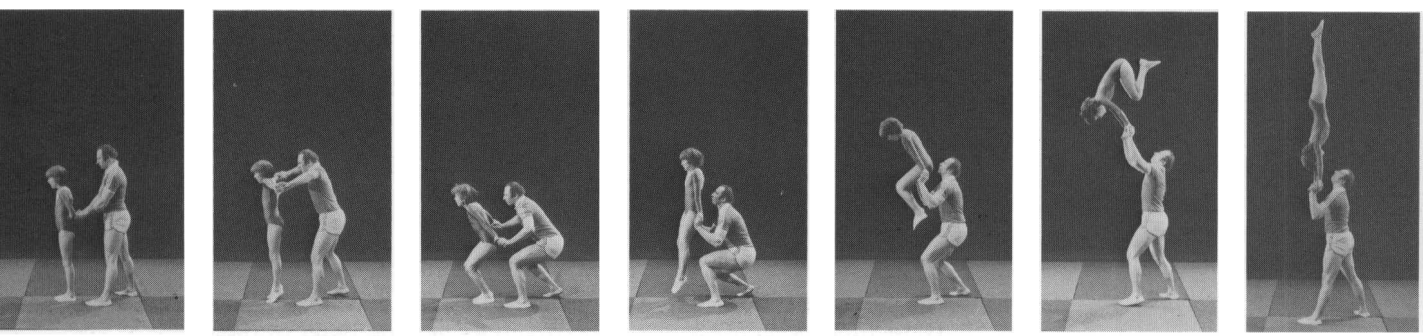
As above but with arms of lower partner straight; shoulders should not be raised off the floor.

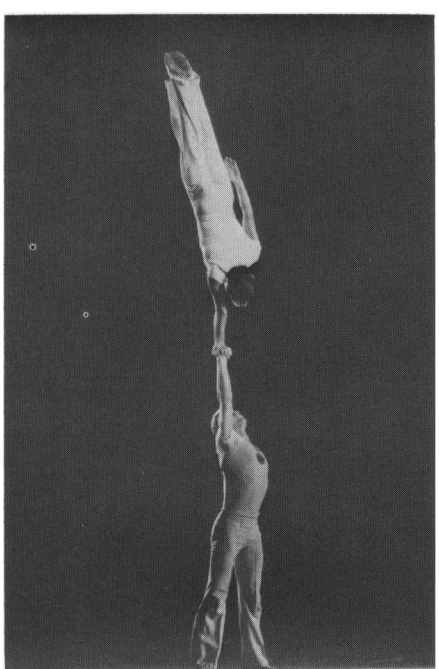
Either the kick or jump from two feet through straddle position may be used as an entry to the hand-ta-hand balances. For first attempts the upper partner may find it useful to kick or jump from a bench.

It is difficult to kick to a straight arm handstand due to the distance

between the floor and the position of the body required to make the balance successful, so a kick often results in an arched back. Therefore, the technique of jumping to the handstand is the most successful in achieving the correct position of hips over the head, arms straight, legs coming up to the handstand to complete the movement. It is necessary for the hips to be in position immediately, so if the gymnast uses the kick, the effort has to be much greater to line up the head, hips and feet immediately.

A useful entry to the hand-to-hand balance described in the women's pairs section is for the upper partner to stand with his back to the lower partner (as shown here in the picture of a mixed pair) and jump through the joined hands to bent or straight arm handstand. The previously



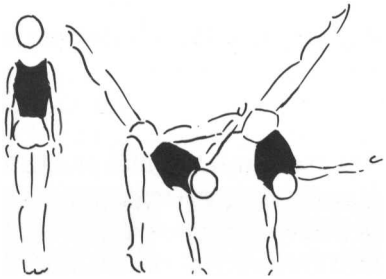


mentioned principle of jumping the hips over the head applies as does the timing of the lift with the lower partner, who must bend the knees so that he gets underneath the upper partner with his forearm vertical to ensure that the balance is lifted up straight and close to the chest, with the upper partner maintaining the very straight tight body position, arms straight. Note the outward movement of the joined hands to initiate the movement.

The upper partner of the men's pairs should concentrate on three important basic elements: the one-arm handstand, the one-arm lever or balance on elbow and the backward tucked somersault. These appear frequently in the more advanced skills and should be developed on the floor, bench or blocks from the beginning, so that they will be ready when required.

One-arm handstand

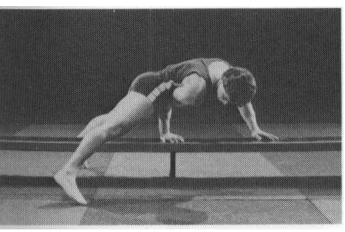
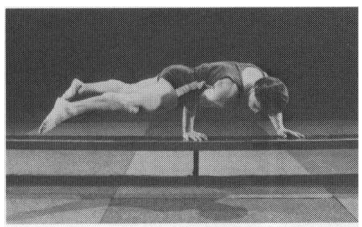
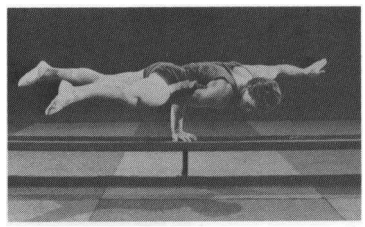
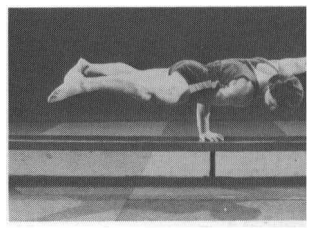
Do a straight handstand, with straddle legs. Transfer weight to one arm and slowly raise the other arm sideways off the floor. Practice can be



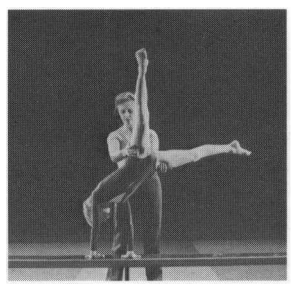
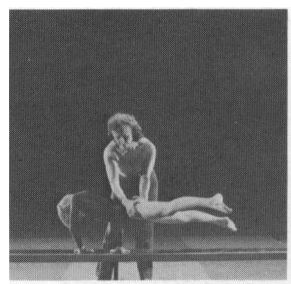
effected either by using a partner to support or performing the handstand against a wall. Also do the one-arm handstand as illustrated from a sideways entry.

One-arm lever or balance on elbow

The object of this is to balance on the elbow which is pulled in underneath the body, keeping the body horizontally straight. There must be a lift of the upper body to counteract the leg lift and this is quite difficult to achieve because the body tends to drop forward. Do the balance first on two elbows either on the floor or a bench and then lift one arm.

As the movement is generally initiated from a handstand, perform the element in pairs from this position, with partner support.

TEMPO ELEMENTS

Backward tucked somersault

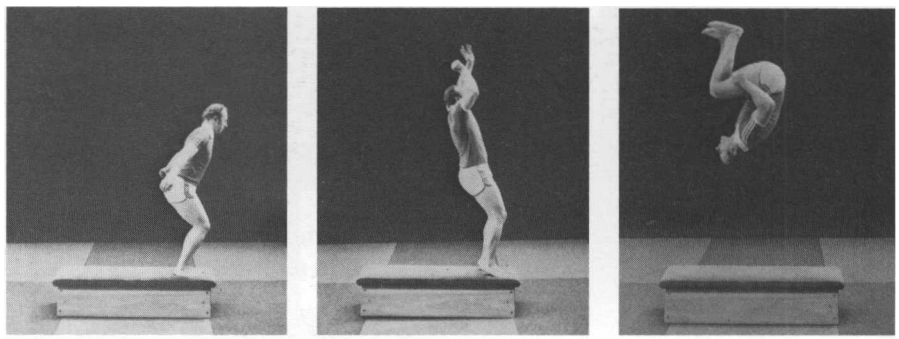
The path of the somersault is described on p. 68. Although this element is performed as a throw from the lower partner (see in women's pairs, p. 81), note that when a men's pair performs this skill the upper partner lands free, not supported as in women's pairs.

It is also necessary in men's pairs for the backward tucked somersault to be performed from standing on shoulders to land back on shoulders after the somersault. Early training by the upper partner to land on a reduced

area is therefore essential and will result in learning the full element much faster when the pair is ready for this skill.

Step 1

Do the somersault on a box or bench. The tuck must be quick and tight, rotating at the height of the somersault so that it opens out in time for the performer to be aware of his landing position. The toes will be turned out on take-off and landing as in the stand on shoulders. It will be helpful to mark the take-off and landing area so that the performer develops awareness. For a somersault to land successfully on the point from which it commences there must be no backward movement on take-off.



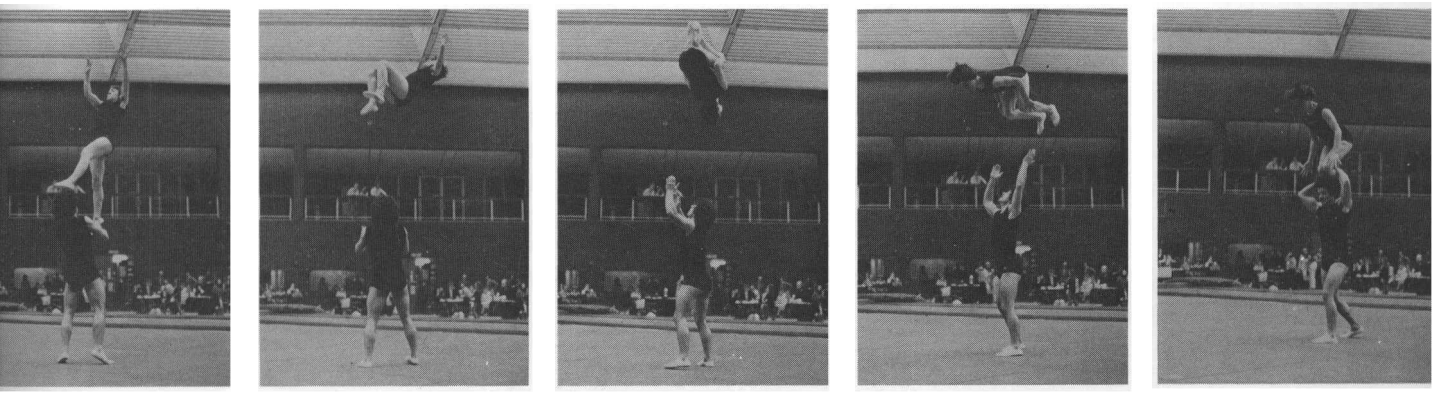
Step 2

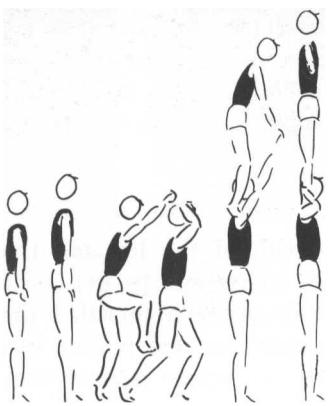
To practise the take-off and landing without actually doing the somersault, have the upper partner standing on the lower partner's shoulders. Lower partner holds upper partner by the calves and slowly bends and straightens his knees to establish a timing for take-off. When the pair are confident with this exercise the upper partner will make a small jump to leave the lower partner's shoulders, the jump being made as the lower partner fully straightens his knees so that the whole movement is rising and continuing upwards as the jump leaves the shoulders. As the upper partner lands back on the shoulders the lower partner bends his knees to absorb the impact, pulling the legs of the upper partner close to his head. Many repetitions of this exercise should be done, and only when all parts of the element are confidently and correctly performed should the whole skill be attempted.

Step 3

Support the whole skill with a rig or a supporter at either side standing on box or vaulting horses at a height sufficient to allow them to support

the upper partner throughout the skill. Make sure when supporting in this manner that the equipment is very secure and close, as it is not possible to give maximum support when in danger of overbalancing. This sequence shows a throw from the floor with a ½ turn by the lower partner to catch the upper partner on shoulders.





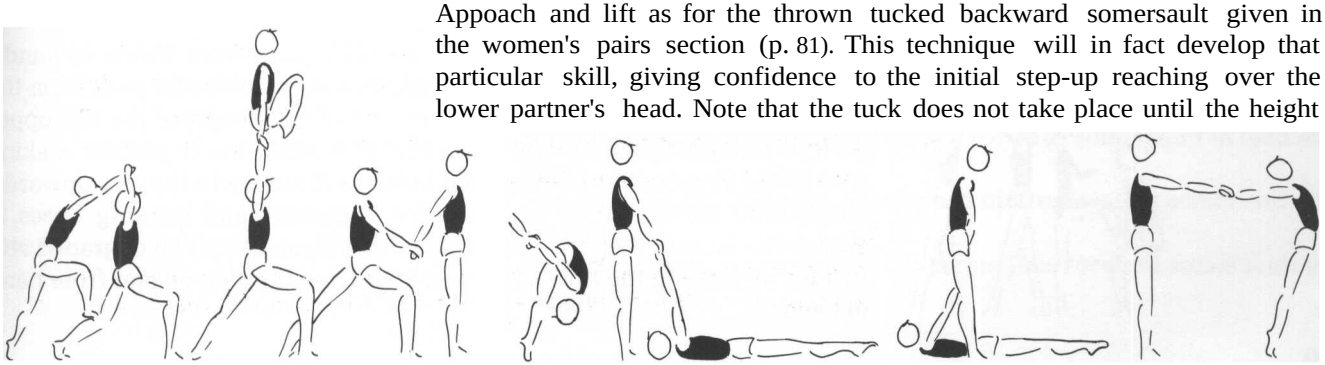
Tempo jump to stand on shoulders

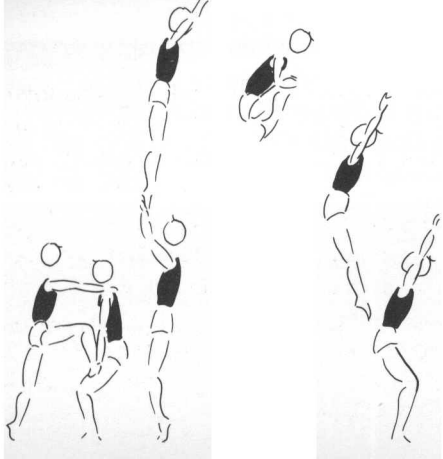
A more precise method of entry to stand on shoulders is by using the calf of the lower partner to spring up to the stand. Upper partner stands behind lower partner who stands with one foot forward, arms raised overhead. The pair join hands. Upper partner places one foot on back of lower partner's calf, lower partner bends and immediately straightens both knees. The upper partner, using this rebound to give speed and lift, jumps on to the shoulders of the lower partner.

The sequence at the foot of this page shows a tempo jump over the head to land on the floor and immediately followed by a forward roll to back-lying and straight lift to counterbalance.

Tucked jump overhead

Appoach and lift as for the thrown tucked backward somersault given in the women's pairs section (p. 81). This technique will in fact develop that particular skill, giving confidence to the initial step-up reaching over the lower partner's head. Note that the tuck does not take place until the height





of the stretched jump is reached. The legs then shoot forward to compensate for the forward momentum, landing securely on the ground.

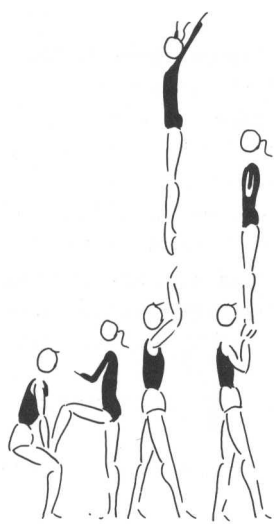
Mixed Pairs

Careful thought must be given to the selection of a pair for this event since one of the main requirements of this section is the 'tossing' and recatching of the female performer. Therefore, if a competitive career is envisaged weight and confidence in flight must be taken as the first priorities, for there will be no possibility of success if the upper partner is too heavy to be tossed in to the air and re-caught, or if she' will not allow herself to be committed to the element, because of fear and lack of confidence in her partner. Synchronisation presents a different challenge as it is more difficult to work with a partner of the opposite sex due to timing and co-ordination of movements, particularly in the linking elements, and therefore usually has to be resolved by a compromise between the partners.

Step up to stand in hands - straight and with a ~turn

The basic step up straight and with a ~turn should have been learned in the basic preparation so that the upper partner is familiar with the element without the actual lift. Now practise placing the foot in the hands of the partner to familiarise the lower partner with the required hold around the middle of the foot, slightly closer to the heel.

The lift straight

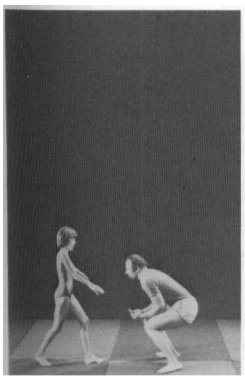
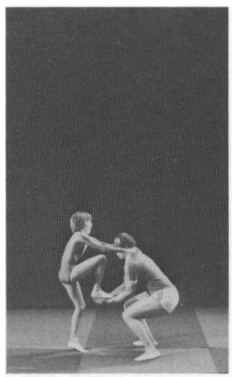
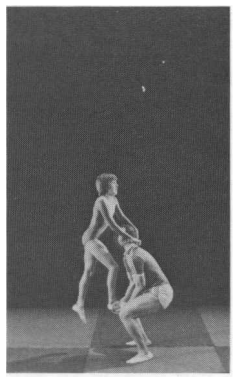
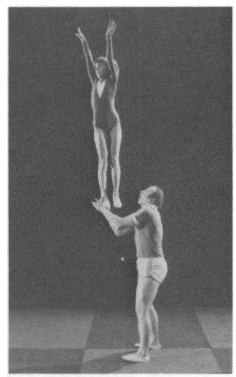
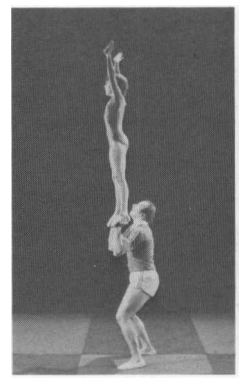
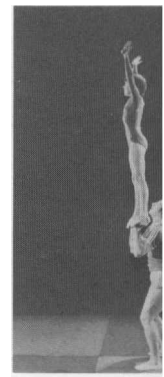


The stance of the lower partner, the path of the lift and the weight distribution are explained in the thrown somersault (p. 81). As the upper partner reaches the top of the lift (which should be higher than the head of the lower partner), the lower partner removes his hands, turns them quickly to the stand position, re-catches the upper partner then lowers arms to a bent arm position. The upper partner remains straight and tight throughout the movement.

Progress from this straight lift to a ~turn jump from hands to hands, using the techniques already explained; that is, an initiating push from the lower partner into the air, making the turn at the height of the lift, upper partner remaining as straight and tight as a stick, lower partner making sure of the elements by having good sense of direction in the toss upwards, eliminating movement of feet in order to correct, and bending knees to absorb the landing impact. The value of this element will be upgraded still further by making the turn a full one, both from the step up and from hand to hand.

The lift with a !turn

For this element the foot of the upper partner will be held by the lower partner from the beginning. Make sure, therefore, that the hold is correct, so that no adjustment is needed to make it secure when the move has been completed and the second foot is placed. Do not make the turn too early, for this will result in either the body position of the upper partner being incorrect and the balance falling forward or the body position being correct but the upper partner too close to the face of the lower partner to make the turn. The turn must be completed before the lower partner bends the arms, so that the upper partner is securely in the hands when the weight is minimal and the lower partner is able to look upward at the feet of the upper partner and control the placing of the second hand.

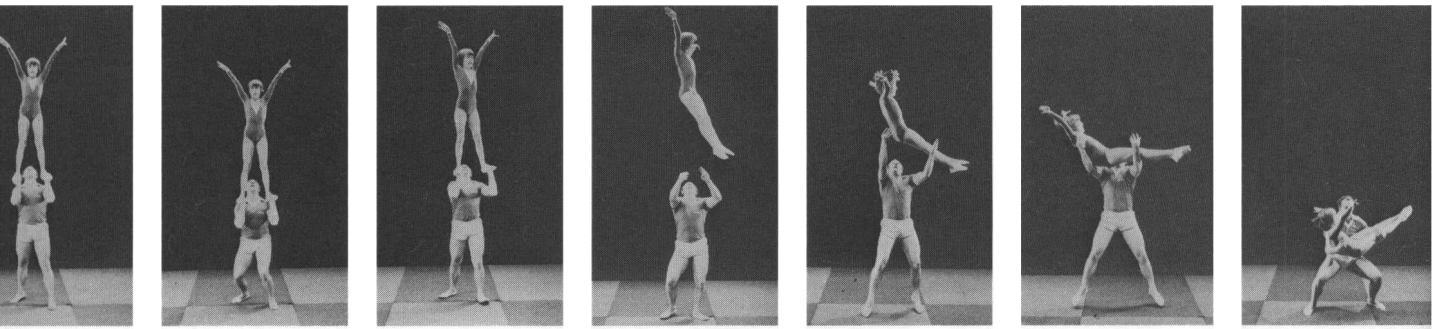







It is important that the size of the step by the upper partner into the hands of the lower partner should be a comfortable one which allows the weight to come forward immediately pressure is placed on the foot. This is an individual adjustment for each pair due to size and is controlled by the amount of knee bend from the lower partner.

Progress to various combinations of the straight and ! turn lift to give the tempo routine in particular added life and continuity.

1 Step up straight, full turn, backward somersault to land on floor.
2 Step **up** ! turn, immediate forward somersault to land on floor.
3 Step up straight, immediate! turn and forward somersault to land on floor.
4 Step up full turn, immediate backward tuck or straight somersault to land on floor.
5 Step up full turn, immediate! turn, immediate forward somersault to land on floor.

After the somersaults to the floor have been perfected the lower partner should attempt to re-catch in the arms after making! turn (see re-catching the forward somersault).



Basic tossing and re-catching

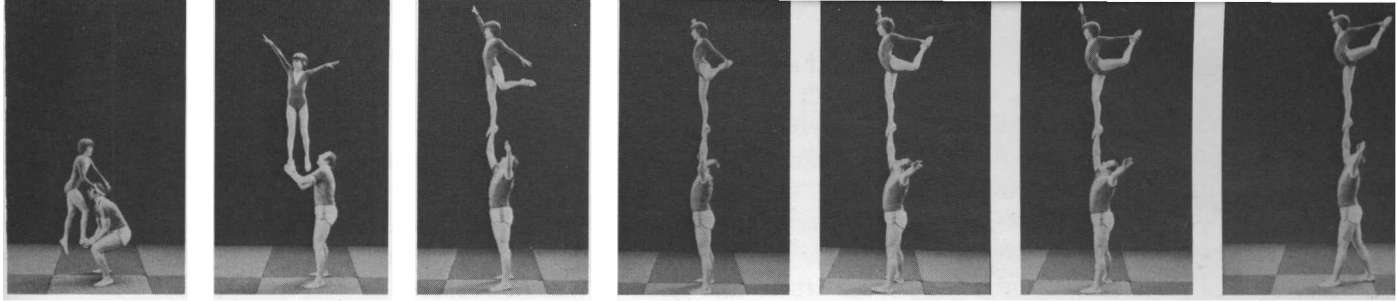
From the stand in hands either forwards or backwards practise tossing and re-catching to familiarise both partners with this situation.

Lower partner initiates the lift into a ! turn in the air. This is made by the upper partner at the height of the lift to land face upwards, in the arms of the lower partner. The arms are stretched upwards and as she pushes the legs forward and lies back there will be a slight 'dish' position, which shows the head and feet slightly higher than the seat. The natural tendency is to fully pike the body but this will make it difficult for the lower partner to support since his aim is to make contact with his partner as soon as possible and lower her downwards in a controlled manner; he will not be able to absorb the impact if he waits too long before making contact. Note the method of support with arms held around back and legs. To maintain balance and enable him to hold the moving weight securely, the lower partner must keep the upper partner close to his chest, not hold her at arms' length.

Also learn the catch with the upper partner landing face downwards. Upper partner must not allow the back to become too hollow on landing. When the! turns to catch are confident do iturns.

Step up to balance in one hand

This balance is one of the most important mixed pair elements because it is the base of many transitional balances contained in this section. The final skill is an advanced element and the following practices should be repeated many times and learned confidently before attempting the whole skill.



Step 1

Lower partner in back-lying position, arms vertically straight; upper partner standing in hands. Upper partner transfers weight to one leg and lower partner releases hold on one foot. Raise the free leg forward or backward.

Practise this situation on first one leg then the other. Achievement of this exercise is when repetitions can be made of transfer to first leg, return to stand in hands, stand on the other leg and return to stand in hands without overbalancing.

Step 2

As the step up ~turn to stand in hands (p. 91), with the lower partner standing, but instead of the lower partner bringing the arms into a bent arm position, extend the arms and hold straight. The upper partner turns at the height of the lift and keeps extending upwards to hold in the high straight arm position.

Step 3

As Step 1 but with the lower partner standing, arms straight.

Step 4

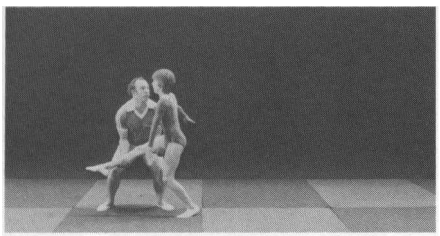
Upper partner: step up to box or bench, make the ~turn and hold the free leg backwards in an arabesque. Do not allow the upper body to lean forward.

Lower partner: taking a medicine ball or similar object practise the lift from the stand with feet slightly apart, knees bent. The lift takes place close to the body, the arm rising continuously until it reaches a straight vertical position. The ~turn is completed just before the arm locks into its final position. As the arm is reaching its final position one foot steps slightly backwards to give a firmer base. The other arm is held sideways.

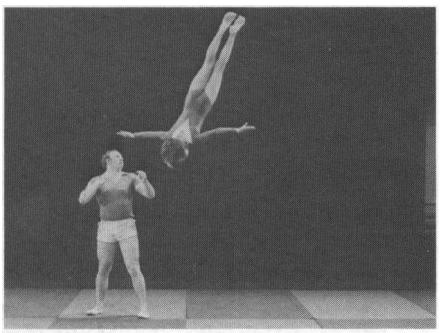
Step 5

Attempt the whole skill to arabesque or one leg bent forward when the

pair are confident in the preparatory skills. This should be done in the rig with a twisting belt or with plenty of safey mats, since it is possible for the balance to come down prematurely either forwards, backwards or sideways, depending on the accuracy of technique.



Progress to the same balance with the upper partner holding one leg (see photos on p. 93). Note that the hold on the leg takes place immediately after the ~turn. The balance will not achieve the correct grading if there is a delay between the turn and the leg lift.



TEMPO ELEMENTS

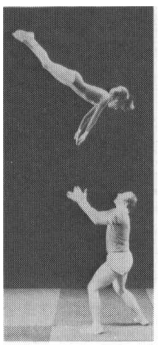
Throw from one leg

An excellent way to learn awareness of space and changing body shape whilst being tossed into the air is for the lower partner to toss the upper partner from one leg into straight, ~or full twisting movements.

Have the lower partner standing by the side of the extended leg of the upper partner supporting the leg and calf. If necessary a coach can also support in the learning stages by standing opposite the lower partner. On take-off, which is initiated by the lower partner slightly bending and stretching the knees, the upper partner will place the hand nearest to the lower partner on his shoulder. The throw is then made straight up in the air, not sideways, so that the lower partner gives maximum lift from both arms. The second leg of the upper partner quickly joins the first leg after take-off to continue with a straight somersault to land on the floor.

Progress by adding a ~turn to the straight somersault and finally the full turn. Because of the take-off position it is usually more satisfactory if the arms of the upper partner in the full turn are placed across the chest.

To establish space awareness and confidence while somersaulting in the air, the mixed pair should practise a thrown somersault.

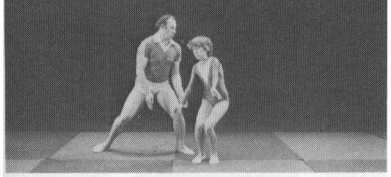


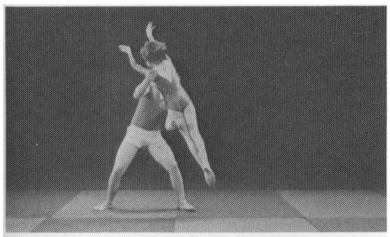
Jump full turn to catch

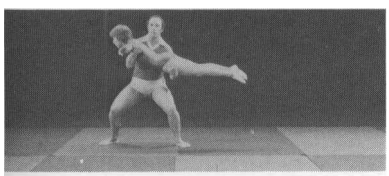
One of the most simple twisting elements which also familiarises the lower partner with the catch is this: the upper partner jumps from standing at the side of the lower partner, making a full turn to land face downwards across both arms of the lower partner. Take care to complete the full turn before landing; if this is not done and the second half of the turn is completed after landing then the element will not be valid.

Progressions for this element would be:

1 Straight jump to front drop in partner's arms.
2 ~turn jump to back drop in partner's arms.



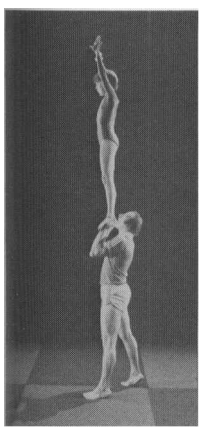


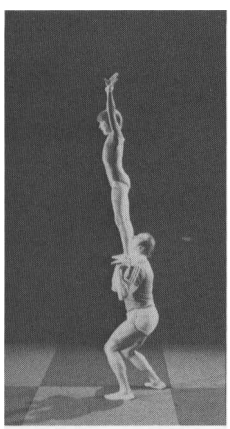


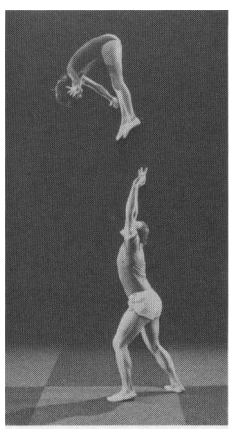
Forward somersault

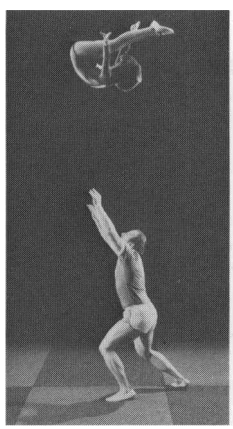
This element is also a valuable base for many more difficult progessions. Awareness and good performance of the forward somersault will have been dealt with before attempting this element, either from a springboard or the top of the box. As with the somersault on shoulders (men's pairs, page 87) this element will be easier from the partner than the box because of the initiating push.

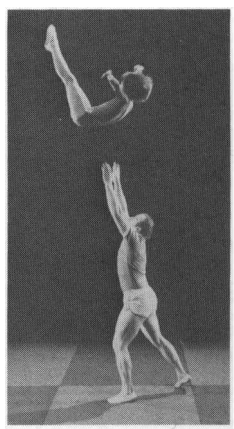
Take-off is with the upper partner standing in the lower partner's hands, facing away from the partner. The initiating push upwards from the lower partner, who fully extends his arms, lifts the upper partner to a straight body position, arms vertical. At the height of the lift, not before, the upper partner either pulls the knees and arms into the tuck position, or folds into a pike position, the shape taking place very quickly and opening out immediately after rotation to be assisted to the ground by the lower partner supporting at the waist. To enable the lower partner to control the element on landing, the somersault does not throw forward on take-off but takes place over the head of the lower partner.

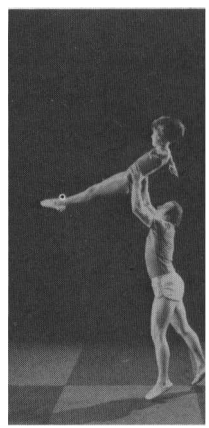






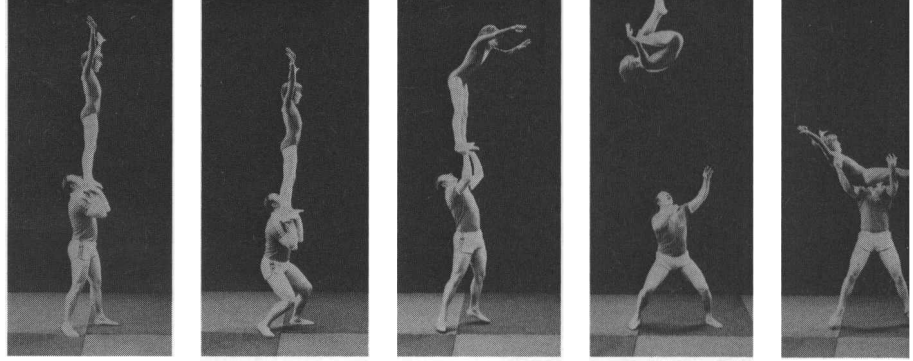






Re-catching the forward somersault

Good execution of the above element with a high overhead somersault is necessary before contemplating a re-catch. To re-catch the foward somersault necessitates movement of the lower partner from the throwing position behind the upper partner to the side. The necessity for the high overhead somersault is now obvious; the height gives the lower partner time to move and assess the re-catch and the direction for correct technique, and more time is given for movement as he must be in the



correct place when the upper partner lands in order to give maximum support.

To become familiar with this movement in a basic manner, have the upper partner standing in the lower partner's hands. Perform a straight lift upwards, and keeping the slight 'dish' position upper partner comes down face upwards to be caught in a back-lying position by the lower partner, who will have moved to the side at right angles to his previous position. A safety mat of average thickness will allow the lower partner to go through the whole movement on the mat, including the change of direction. Alternatively, he may stand at the corner of the safety mat, stepping round the edge on the turn, leaving the mat underneath the upper partner at all times. The coach should cover the landing of the upper partner by standing opposite the lower partner after he has turned and if necessary assist in the catch. When moving on to the complete element of the forward somersault to catch, the upper partner must learn to open out the somersault earlier than if it was landing on the floor, so that she is in a lay-out position, head and legs slightly higher than the seat, body parallel to the ground.

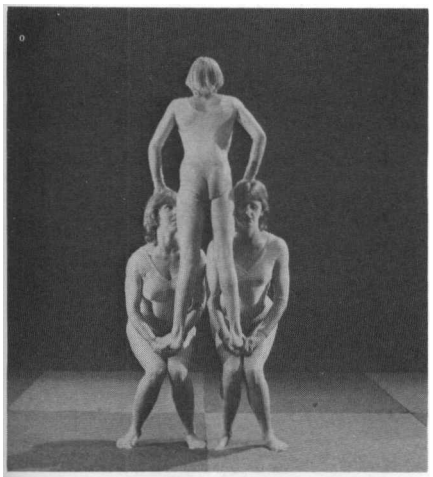
Women's Trio

A basic education in pairs is valuable to potential trio participants because very basic trio balances tend to give one member very little to do in a balance or climbing situation and are not, therefore, realistic preparation for the very challenging content of the competitive routine. The more progressive trio balances are continuations of pair work and give added justification for prior involvement with pairs. In addition to the usual requirements which apply for pair selection (p. 36) it is necessary for the first girl (base) to be strong and a good supporter. The second girl (middle) needs climbing and balancing experience in addition to being a good supporter. The third girl (top) needs a head for heights and awareness in

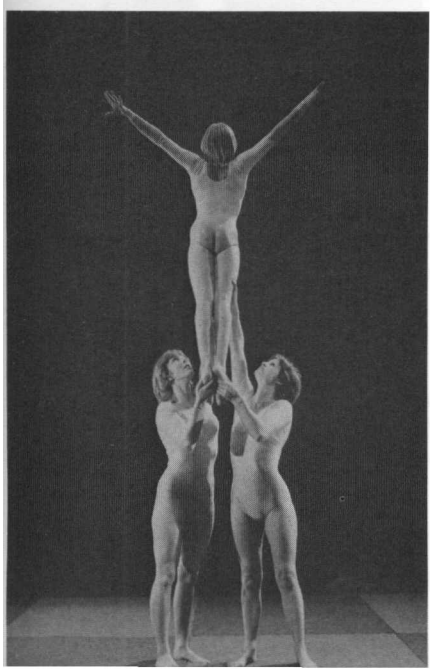
flight, in addition to climbing and balancing experience. Also, as do all girls who work as the upper partner, she needs the contradictory skills of excessive suppleness and outstanding body tightness, which because they are contradictory are not generally naturally contained within one person and have to be developed.

SUPPORTS

Supports are used to form part of the competitive routine and are also very useful to establish a rhythm between the three people for future more difficult elements, particularly as trio work requires a considerable amount of supporting by members one and two. A support situation does not involve all three in a balance situation but allows two people to lift a third whilst in a secure position on the floor.



1 Second and third girls stand side by side, knees bent, feet slightly apart, hands on knees as for thrown somersault. Third girl steps into hands one at a time, hands one on either head. See left. Holding the heel of the third girl in one hand, second and first girls make a! turn inwards to face each other. at the same time lifting the third girl high between them and transferring the inner hand to the front of the upper leg of the third girl who raises both arms and extends body upwards. See below. Dismount by lowering to floor.

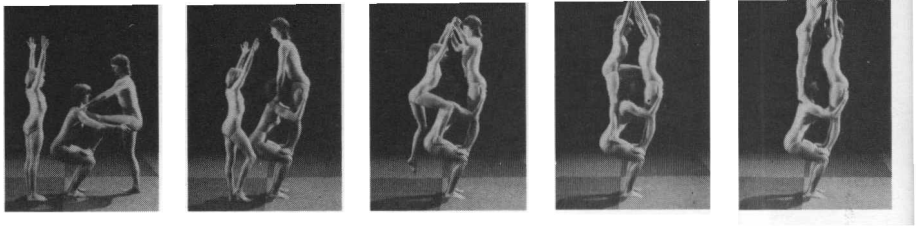


2 Support from the front holding the hips as in a forward angel. Second supporter standing at the side holds the knees. stepping underneath to complete the support as the lift overhead is made.

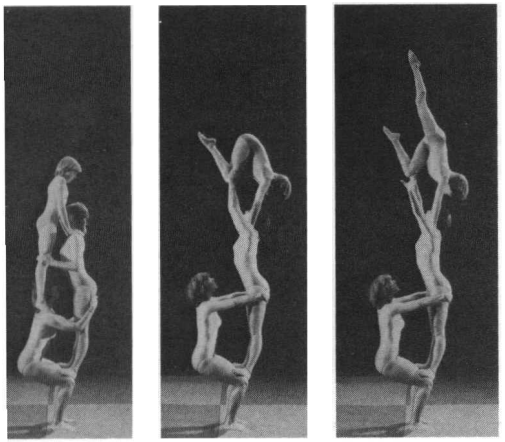
BALANCES

The first challenge is to build a pyramid with three people instead of two. However, most trio balances can be broken down into a pair situation, Le. first and second girl and second and third girl. Alternatively, some balances require the first and third girl to work together and the first and second. The first situation usually applies to balances built three people high and the second to a balance on the ground where both second and third person balance on the first.

Balances can be reduced in height for practice situations by having the first girl either kneeling down on the floor or sitting on the top of a box. Occasionally the second and third girls will build the top half of the balance on the top of the box omitting the first girl until they are confident in their performance of the element. The final outcome of trio building is three people high, but initially it is not taken to this level but is built with both second and third girls standing on the first, usually one on the knees and one on the shoulders. Build the latter as follows:



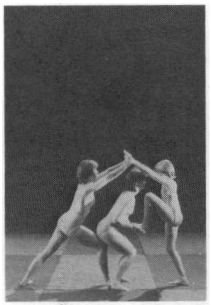
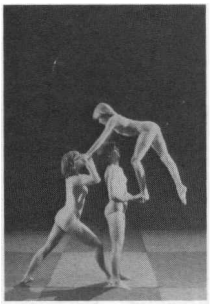
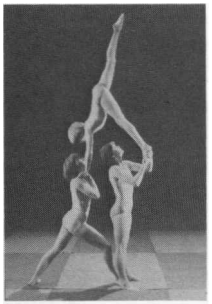
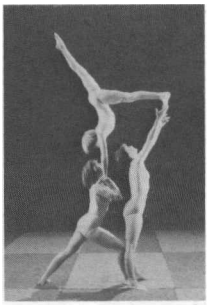
1 First and second stand on knees facing. Third stands behind first, taking hands of second. Third steps confidently on the upper leg and then to the shoulders of the first, using climbing methods previously explained (p. 46) to keep weight over stepping-up leg and not to allow any delay between steps which will cause incorrect weight distribution and overbalancing. This stand is the base for many more difficult balances with the third girl balancing on the second girl and is therefore a very important step towards trio work. For the moment the third girl will remain on the shoulders of the first girl, lifting one leg and holding it high sideways to create a preliminary balance.



2 To convert the women's pair balance shown on p. 79 into a balance for a trio, climb as for previous trio balance and when the third girl is standing on the shoulders of the first girl do the balance between second and third girls as in the pair situation. The different positioning of the feet of the second girl and the fact that no movement can be made to correct the balance with the feet are compensated by the fact that the third girl is in a higher and, therefore, better position for the lift. Obviously it must be a lift and not a jump, so as not to disturb the balance. The first and second girls have the responsibility of keeping the pyramid vertical. Therefore, they must ensure that their stand on knees is technically correct, with the second girl completely straight and on balance in her own right, not leaning backwards totally dependent on the first girl. Otherwise, especially when the third girl is in position, the weight of the second and third girls will be far too much for the first girl to counteract and the pyramid will fall. Building in sports acrobatics is no different from building with a pile of dominoes: if the pile is perfectly straight up it stays up without any problem; if it is slightly out of line it wobbles; if it is badly out of line and leaning to one side, it falls. Therefore line, which keeps the body weight over the base. must be maintained. In all balances of this nature, the ability of the second girl to lift the third girl into various positions over her head without disturbing the line of balance is vital to the success of the pyramid.

Like all the specialised sections, the trio must have a varied selection of

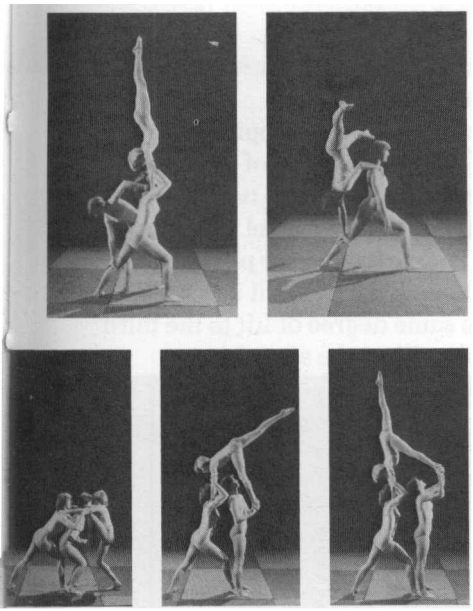
balances in the routine. To create this variation there are some balances which do not build upwards, but are on the floor and rely on the holding ability of the first girl and the handstand skills of the second and third girls. An added advantage to this type of balance is that it does not take quite as long to build and, since there is a time limit to a competitive routine, it can be useful to include one balance of this nature.

3 First girl stands close behind second girl, in lunge position, arms stretched upward and forward around the head of the second girl. Second girl crouches as for throwing a somersault and takes one foot of the third girl, who is standing facing her, into her hands. Third girl joins hands with first girl.

As second girl lifts third girl over her head, first girl pulls the joined hands to a bent arm handstand position.

Second girl must lift high and slowly overhead, keeping her arms close to her body so that the hips of the third girl are lifted immediately to the handstand position, maintaining the hold on the second leg until body and first leg are in position. Releasing the second leg is more an opening of the hands and allowing the foot to continue rather than quickly letting go and endangering the handstand. When the third girl is in the handstand position, the second girl moves to the opposite side of the first girl to complete the balance by doing a handstand on the extended leg of the first girl. One arm is on the calf and the other either on the shoulder or around the neck of the first girl. Make sure that the body is in line with the back leg of the first girl, not twisted sideways. The kick to handstand must be sure and smooth.

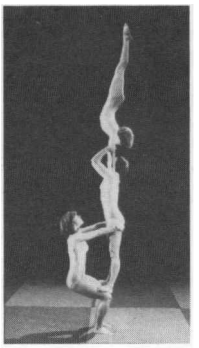


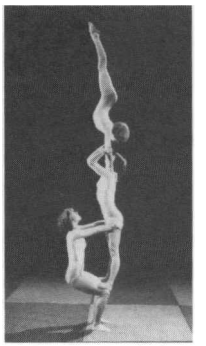
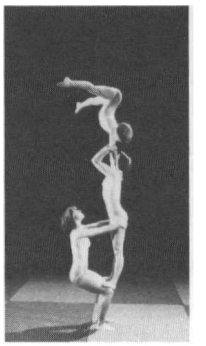
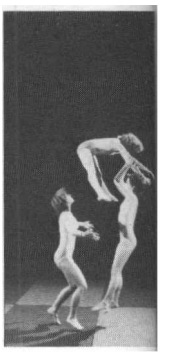
The handstand in this case may be done with the hands of the third girl on the shoulders of the first girl who supports the arms. In this case, to build the balance the first girl would take the wrists to put the handstand into position, leaving the hands free to be placed on her shoulders. The type of handstand performed will affect the placing of the arm of the second girl if she uses the hold around the neck of the first girl.

The first girl will require a fairly deep lunge to allow for the balance on the back leg, and in fact the width of her lunge may be dependent on the arm length and balance position of the second girl.

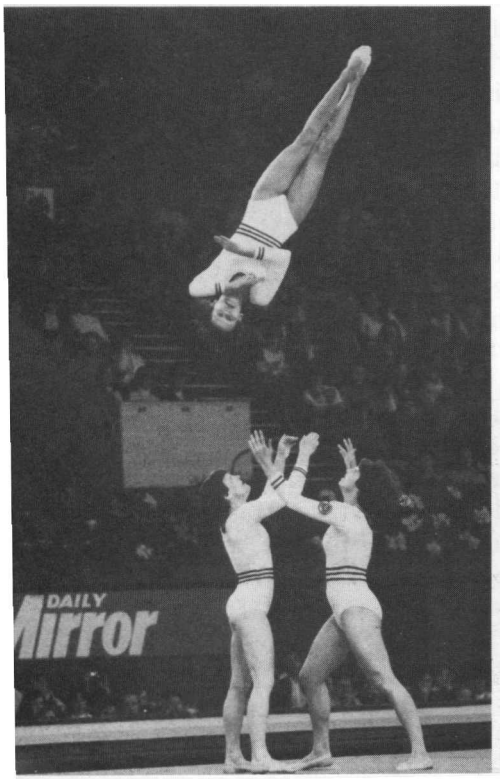
The progression from this balance would be for the first girl to slide to splits whilst maintaining the balance of the second and third girls.

The type of lift to handstand used in this balance is similar to one used in a three-high situation to lift the third girl to handstand on the shoulders of the second girl from standing on the shoulders of the first girl.

TEMPO ELEMENTS

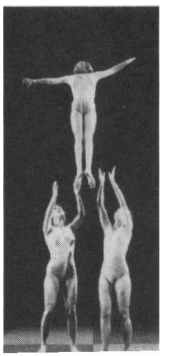


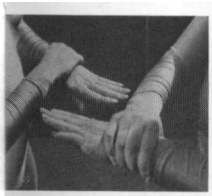
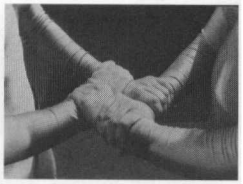
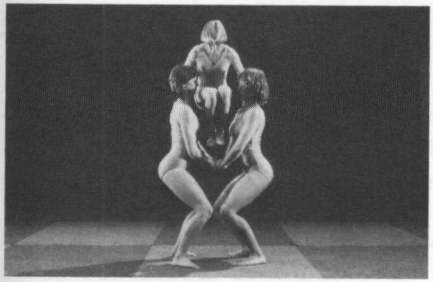
The second most important change from the pair situation is in the tempo routine where the same principles of flight in the air occur, but instead of the lift being initiated by one person, two can now be used, thus introducing holds not previously employed.

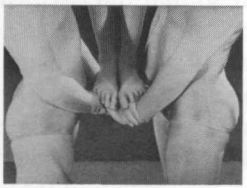
1 The first is similar to the pair situation with two people side by side. knees bent, feet a little way apart. hands one on top of the other, resting on knees. If there is a height difference between the two people some adjustment may be necessary to make the knees level. If one is higher than the other then any somersault thrown from the platform will not be straight and will be difficult to land. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that the two people give the same degree of lift to the third person or once again the somersault will not be straight.

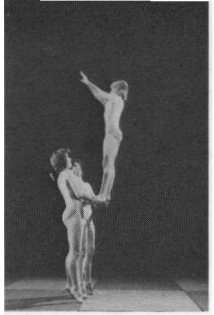
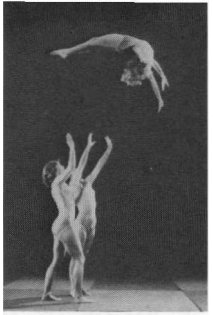
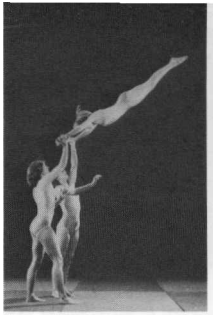
The approach difference as far as the third girl is concerned is that she







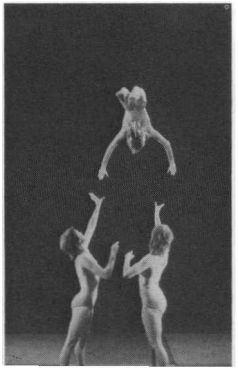
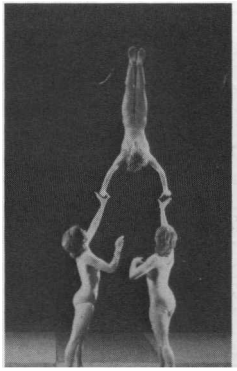

is able to use two feet for the lift off, and instead of using the shoulders as hand support she uses the heads to aid the step up, one foot at a time. As the timing of the two steps in relation to the throw is a new situation the trio must practise this with a high jump backwards and use the same progressive approach to somersaults as in the backward tucked somersault for pairs (p. 81). The landings of the third girl are supported by first and second as in the women's pairs section.

2 The second is the introduction of the platform. (See top left photo showing how to initiate the hold.) The reason for the platform is that it gives a much more secure base on which to stand, take-off and land, enabling more difficult elements to be performed, and placing the supporters in a much better and stronger position for throwing higher and controlling the skill because they are in a standing position, supporting each other in a very secure manner. The same principles of lifting apply: bend the elbows and lift the platform upwards in front of the face.

To familiarise all parties with the platform, do a straight jump upwards and backwards to the floor from the platform until the third girl is confident at taking off from this situation and the first and second girls are used to the new lift.

Attempt the first somersault from a sitting position, using the previously mentioned knee bend of the supporters to initiate the element, which will be in a tucked position. This element is a throw over backwards rather than



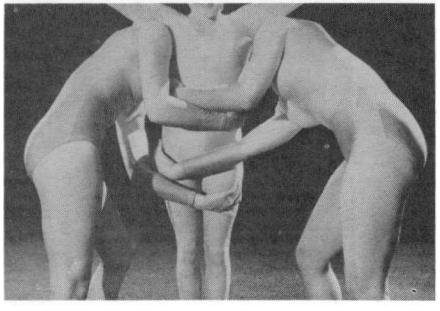



a true somersault. Supporters must remember not to lean forward when doing the initiating knee bend, but to keep the back straight.

Progress to the standing backward tucked and the straight somersault which will land on the floor close to the two supporters, who turn to support the landing of the third girl as soon as rotation begins.

One of the important aspects of trio work is the catching of the third girl from a somersault, using either method for take-off, and after the catch tossing her immediately into the air for a full turn, re-catch and overthrow to the floor. This type of skill is where the need for body tightness on the part of the third girl is very noticeable and where previous thorough preparation in this field will be rewarded.

To learn a skill of this nature one must first of all look at the end of the element rather than the beginning to study how the catch is made. It would not be appreciated by the third girl if she was thrown in the air without the first and second girl knowing how to catch. If the somersaults to catch are lifted into the air from the platform, it is not possible to support a body travelling at speed and landing in a position parallel to the ground this way. Therefore, on completion of the lift the platform is broken, the palms turned upwards and the arms held out so that the performer lands across the four arms. Do not hold the arms too low or the space needed to absorb the impact after the catch will be too small and will result in the third girl being too close to the ground on landing.

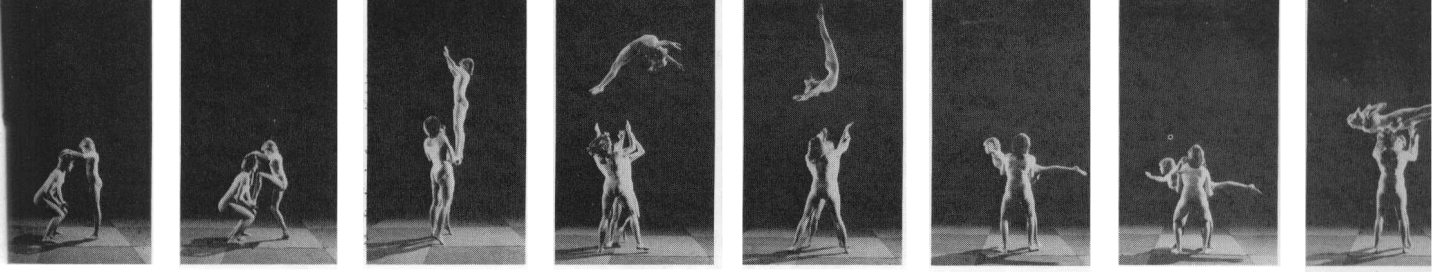


To ensure that the arms of the first and second girls do not collide when placing them in position for the catch, if one is delegated to support the upper body and the other the legs then the arms will interlock alternately in a safe support situation.

To learn the toss without the somersault one must therefore toss the third girl from the hold in the arms. Do a straight toss initiated by the knee bend and catch in front-lying position. Use the same method to learn the! turn and the full turn. Third girl must concentrate on keeping the body very tight, arms overhead. Hollowing will make a successful throw and catch extremely difficult. Do a backward walk-over to come out of the element, progressing to an overthrow, that is, a strong lift by the supporters of the legs of the third girl to initiate a turn-over to land with the feet on the floor.

To simulate the take-off from the platform to land in the arms of supporters, the third girl should stand on the platform. She must make a small jump to land either face upwards or face downwards in the arms of the supporters. Progress to an immediate toss into ! turn and full turn, followed by the overthrow to the floor.

Only attempt the full element of the somersault to catch when the third



Somersault *initiated* from a ~hrow

girl is confident on the platform and can execute a good high somersault that does not travel backwards. The somersault must be very tight with the tuck position held longer than usual for the extra rotation required to land on the back, as it is a **!!** somersault that is required. The trampoline can be used to achieve this extra rotation on to the back, provided it is used in the presence of a qualified coach.

The rig is very useful for attempting a complete skill of this nature, or the presence of the coach at the head of the third girl as she completes the somersault to give assistance to absorb the impact.

Men's Group

Men's group differs from all other sections in that the participants build a column rather than perform a balance routine, whilst the tempo routine follows the accepted pattern. The column consists of a static pyramid which is built and held for four seconds. For this exercise no music is necessary and because of the height achieved a safety mat can be used.

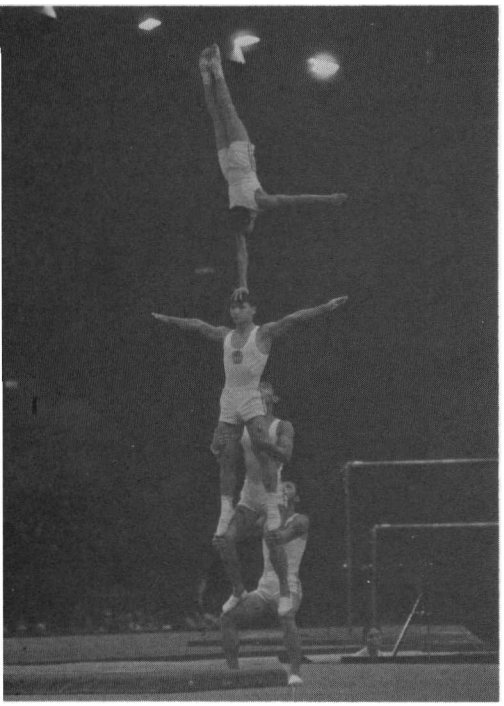
The target for the group is to build a column four men high, but clearly it is necessary to build up to this through graded balances. In competition, the groups can either build two simple pyramids of a low tariff, or one of a high tariff. Therefore, it is advisable to develop two simple columns in the early stages before attempting a three- or four-man-high column.

The need to work in pairs has already been stressed but this rule is particularly applicable to the men's group. The formation of the four needs very careful planning. Due to the difficult elements involved and the strength required it is not a section for young children, particularly in the case of the first and second persons. This is why a lot of the preparatory work is done in pairs. All those involved need to be supple, courageous, have good co-ordination and awareness, particularly the top two who are concerned with most of the flight situations. The four have a big responsibility to each other and each must at all times have complete faith in the other three. The training period for men's group is a long one, due to the amount of training in twos and threes required before the group are ready to begin working together as a four. Some of the skills required up to the three-man stage are therefore covered in the following pages.

A SUGGESTED METHOD OF TRAINING

For purposes of identification refer to the photograph below.

4 Top
3
2
1 Base



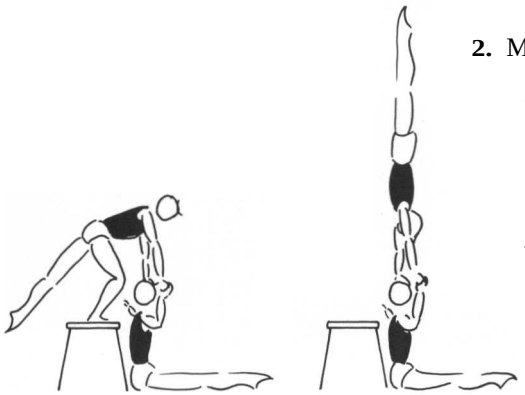
A Man 1 with Man 2
Man 3 with Man 4
B Man 1 with Man 3
Man 2 with Man 4
C Man 1, Man 2, Man 3
Man 2, Man 3, Man 4
D Man 1, Man 2, Man 3, Man 4.

While dividing the four into the suggested groupings above it is often necessary to group according to the construction of the routine and the abilities of the individuals concerned. This will decide the permutations adopted: for example, the top person may need to work with the base, while the second works with the third, for selected skills.It must be remembered that all the basic pair work and that for men's pairs are essential to the men's group. Certain elements from both women's and mixed pairs, such as the backward somersault from a throw or the step into hands! turn, front somersaults (see pp. 81,91 and 95) are also necessary.

Preparation work must include the following:

1. Men 1 and 2

a All methods of standing on shoulders two high:
i Stepping up using thigh
ii Tempo jump using back leg of lower partner
iii Jumping backwards through arms
iv Stepping into hand, as used for three and four high
b All methods of standing on knees, forward and backward:
i Stepping up
ii Jumping up
c Upper partner standing on lower partner's feet



2. Men 3 and 4

a All pair handstand balances:
i Upper partner on bent arms of lower
ii Upper partner on straight arms of lower
iii Upper partner on bent arm and head of lower
iv Upper partner one arm balance on head of lower
b Climbing two high

3. Men 1 and 3, 2 and4

a All methods of standing on shoulders
b All methods of standing on knees
c All methods of pair handstands
d All methods of thrown somersaults
e All methods of somersaults from shoulders to floor

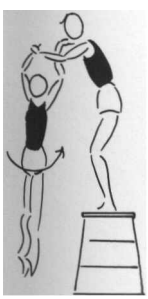
Balance for men 2, 3 and 4

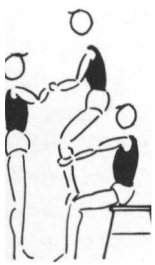
Step 1

Man 4 mounts from the rear, stepping on thigh of Man 2, using either both arms of Man 3 or one arm of Man 3 and head of Man 2 to arrive-in stand on shoulders of Man 2. Take hands and step up to shoulders of Man 3.

Step 2

Progress to the top man doing the various types of handstand listed above, which have already been prepared with Man 3. Use the overhead rig.





Balance for men 1, 2 and 3

Step 1

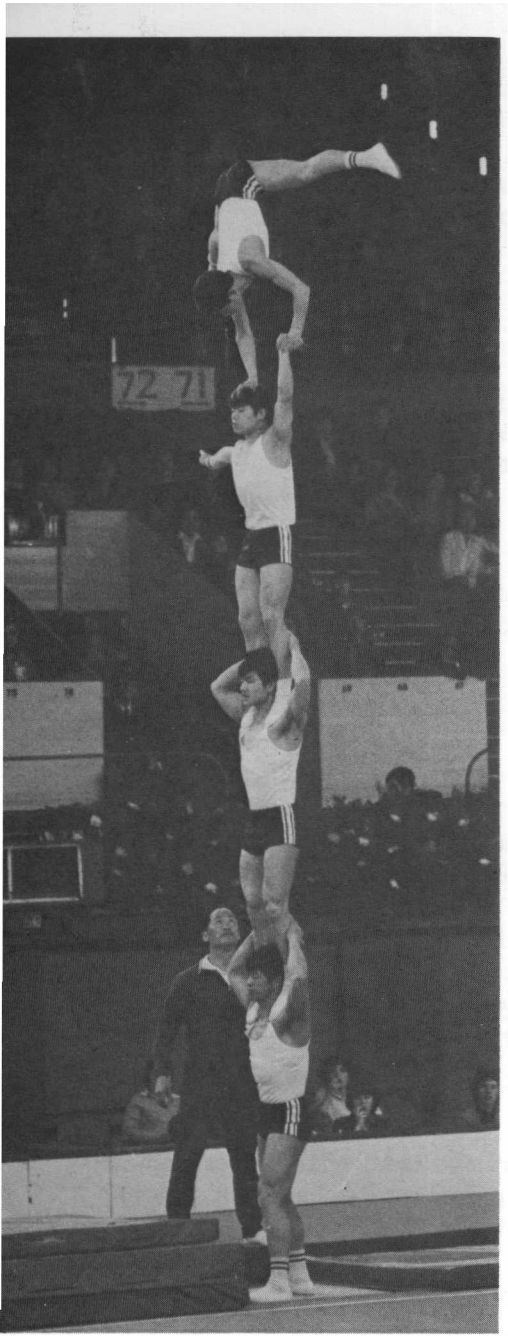
This is a difficult element and will need a considerable amount of training time. Each step must be totally absorbed and performed confidently before moving on to the next step. Give attention to the points already mentioned: maintaining the line, which means being able to bend down and use the arms to assist another person to climb without disturbing the balance, and having total confidence to commit oneself to the element. Note the position of the arms before take-off and during the lift.

Step 2

When the first step is performed confidently lower the box and add the base man in a sitting position. Then progress to the base man standing and the top man taking off from the top of the box.

Step 3

Finally, attempt the skill as a whole.

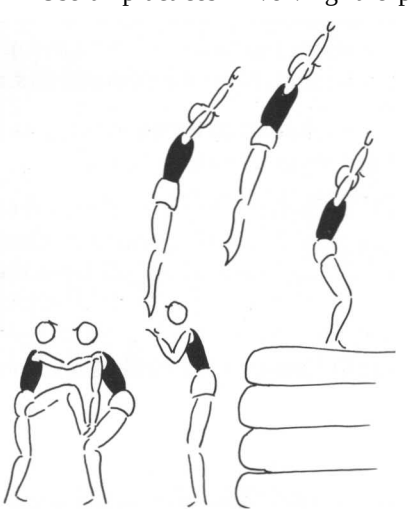


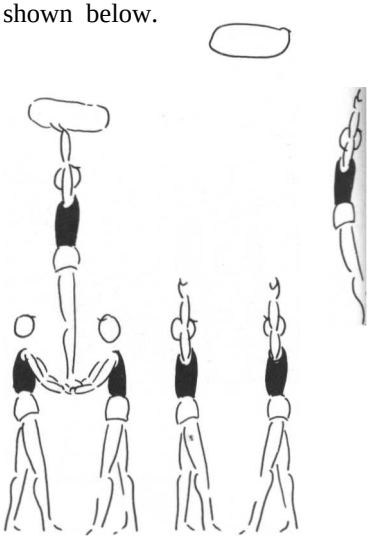
This is just one method of starting to achieve a four-high balance, the ultimate being a column of three men on shoulders, the fourth doing a one-handed balance on the head of the third (see photos). The training method for column building using the one hand at the base of the spine and the arm overhead (p. 104) to pull the man up should therefore be practised constantly in addition to the other methods, using a step-by-step process and perfecting each stage. The types of pyramid and methods of entry and exit are endless, but looking at just one of the difficult elements involved and the preparation required underlines the need for extreme patience and caution in the preparation of this section.

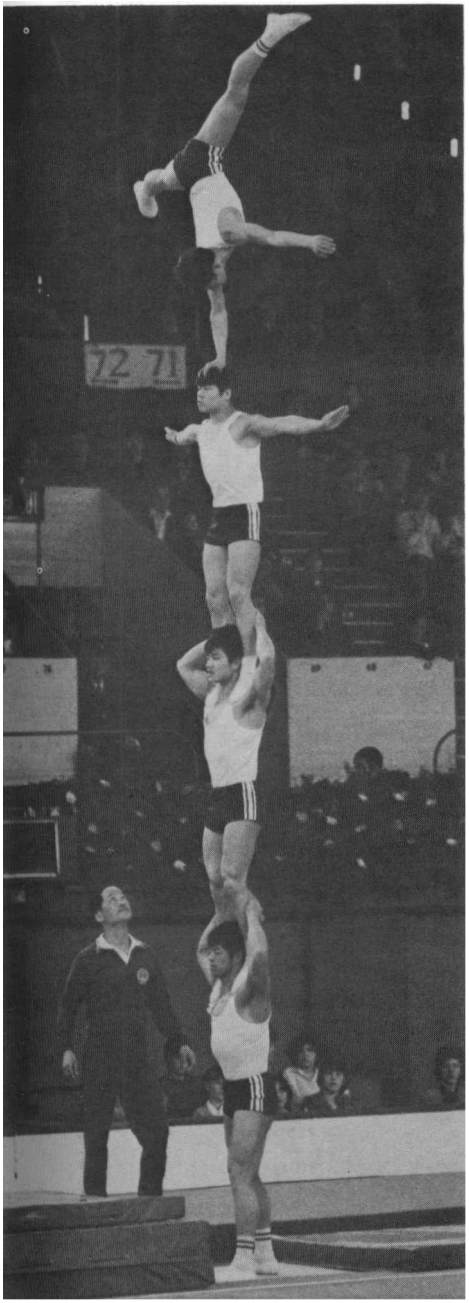
TEMPO

The platform plays a large part in the introduction of the tempo routine, as it is used frequently throughout for take-off and landing by Men 3 and 4. To become familiar with this take-off, approach the introduction and development work in a similar manner to the women's trio. However, since the men's group are required to land on the platform continually, do straight jumps to land back on the platform, as well as straight jumps and somersaults from the platform to land on the floor. Base men should note that the arms do not come down immediately after take-off, because they need to make contact with the man in the air early before lowering him down to platform level. This point illustrates the teamwork involved: the base men are responsible for the direction of the throw, by lifting equally, and also for having the hands in the correct place for the landing; the top man must respond to the straight lift by doing the jump or somersault with correct technique, which includes opening out at the correct time and extending the body in time for the landing, thus giving the base men every opportunity of following the movement and making a successful catch.

Useful practices involving the platform are shown below.







To give experience in landing, perform the element first onto the top of the box or safety mats and then onto the platform.

Note the use of a weighted object to take the place of the top man.

This element will eventually progress to two men on platform, standing on shoulders, third man jumping to floor, fourth man landing on platform.

Further progress ions leading to and including all four men would be:

a Third man holding weighted object and doing a gaining backward somersault (somersault which takes off forward but rotates backward) to land on floor, base men catching the weight.

b As above but with fourth man on shoulders of third and jumping to platform as third man somersaults to floor.

c As above but with fourth man doing backward somersault to land on platform as third man somersaults to floor.

Tumbling

The tumbling section of sports acrobatics requires the performer to link elements together in a continuous manner. Since the special tumbling run is much longer than the standard floor area it allows a sequence of difficult elements to be performed one after the other down the full length of the run.

To train the gymnasts to develop sufficient stamina to enable these continuous runs to be performed, the coach must start by linking basic elements together in such a way as gradually to build up power in the arms and legs. This helps to ensure that the last element in a competition can be performed as competently as the first. A further aspect which must be taken into account in the early stages of training is that all elements must be performed in a perfectly straight line. In international competition there will be a line down the centre of the mat to enable the judges to see whether the tumble is straight, and there is a deduction of points for moving out of line. This means that all elements must be performed with the correct technique, particularly those which include a turn which makes it even more difficult to stay on line. It is therefore an advantage to train basic elements with a line down the mat, so that at the later stages when the skills are more advanced the gymnast is used to tumbling down the centre of the mat.

Exercises

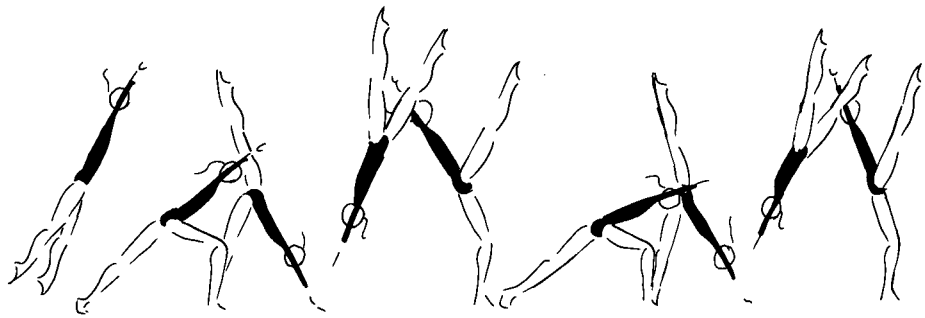
The exercises suggested overleaf are designed to develop tumbling continuity, arm and leg power, and to help the gymnast to move in a straight line.

1 Forward roll, full turn jump, forward roll, 1turn backward roll, !turn cartwheel, cartwheel.

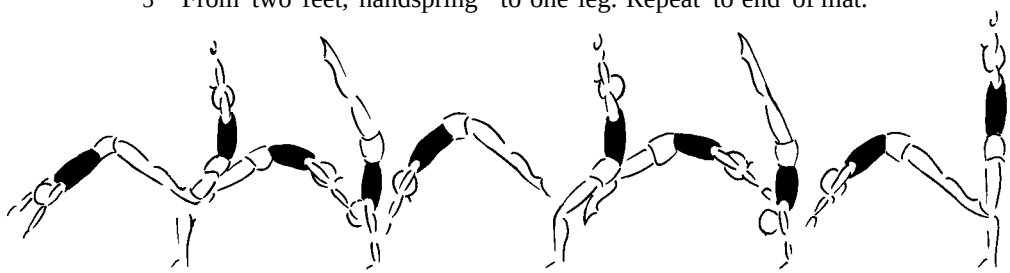
2 Chasse cartwheel on the left hand (step close step or skip step in to cartwheel). Repeat on right hand.

3 From two feet, jump in to round-off. On landing 1turn, arms overhead, and repeat to end of mat.

4 From two feet, jump in to handspring to land on two feet. Repeat without any linking steps to end of mat.



5 From two feet, handspring to one leg. Repeat to end of mat.



6 From two feet, back flip to end of mat.

7 From one or two steps, handspring to one leg, cartwheel. Repeat without any linking steps to end of mat. (This exercise is particularly useful for establishing change of direction at speed and encouraging straight-line tumbling.)

8 From one or two steps, round-off and do a series of back flips to end of mat. (Drive from the heels to make sure the back flips are long and powerful, with an even rhythm.)

9 From one or two steps, round-off, back flip to land on one leg, 1turn, cartwheel, round-off, back flip.

10 From one or two steps, round-off, back flip, tucked backward somersault, back flip to end of mat, to familiarise the tumbler with working out of the somersault.

6 Strengthening

General basic strengthening exercises should be performed by all participants in the sport. More specialised exercises will be required when performers have become seriously involved in a special section of the sport and are aware of the role they intend to play, Le. upper or lower partner or tumbler. Also, at more advanced level, it will be possible to assess individual strengths and weaknesses and devise individual training programmes accordingly.

Suggested exercises for beginners

Legs

Sprint in crouch position

Astride jumps across a bench

Jumps from crouch to crouch travelling down the gymnasium

Arms

Press-ups against a wall

Throwing a medicine ball

Abdomen

Lie face upwards, with a partner sitting on your feet, and do sit-ups

Lifting the feet approximately 7in (18cm) off the floor and holding for at least five seconds

Raise both legs together slowly and lower

Back

Lie face downwards, with a partner sitting on your feet, clasping the hands behind the head, lift the upper body and lower

Suggested exercises for the same body parts, but of a more concentrated nature

Legs

Hop down the gymnasium first on one leg then on the other

Forward roll, jump high and touch toes in straddle

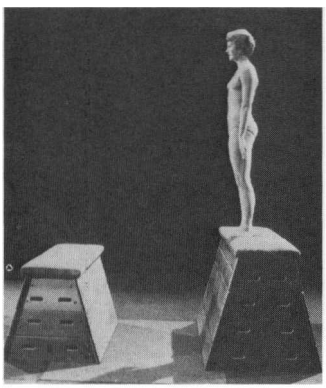
Hold a barre or beam; raise one leg forward and bend the knee of the supporting leg without raising the heel

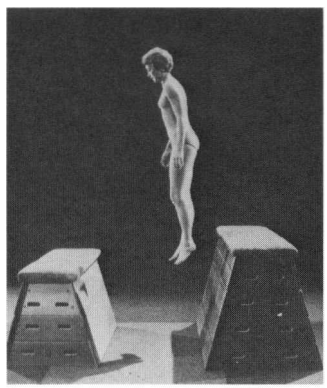
Skip with a rope

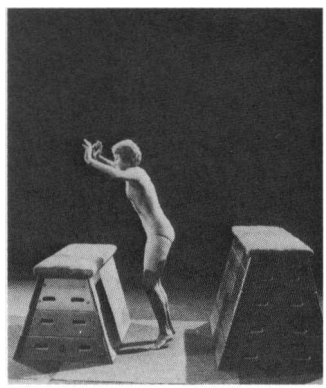
Squat thrusts linked with crouch jumps

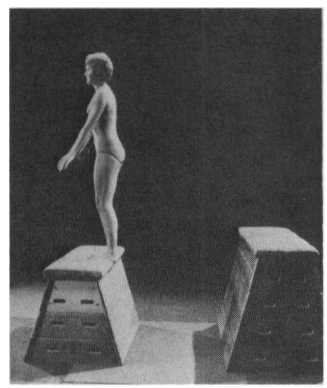
Set out benches and boxes of varying heights, leaving sufficient space between to land; start by jumping fr.om two feet onto the object, then to the floor, covering all the obstacles; then jump over the first object and on to the second down the course. Continue varying the pattern of the jumps until the highest obstacle has been jumped over

Have a box with four sections and a box with three or two sections; jump off the high one to the floor and immediately jump to one of the lower boxes with no extra jumps in between









Arms

Press-ups

Press-ups with feet on bench

Hang on a bar, keeping legs still; bend the arms until head is over the bar-chin-ups

With a partner, push from headstand to handstand

Abdomen

Hang on a bar and lift feet to face

Lie on the floor, raise head, shoulders and feet; hold for ten seconds

Lie on the floor, raise feet 7in (18cm) from the floor; lift legs to the vertical slowly and lower. Repeat without the feet being placed on the floor. These last two exercises are done lying on the back

Back

Lie face downwards on the box with a partner sitting on the feet, body hanging over the end of the box; lift and lower upper body

Exercise for the lower partner - use a bench fastened to wall bars: hold the bench and bend into the sitting position required for pyramids, straighten and repeat [bench press)

Lie face downwards on the floor, lift arms and upper body and legs, hold for five seconds. Relax and repeat

Generally strength training is held at the end of the session. The planning of these sessions and the extent of the strengthening will be dependent on the ability of the class and the amount of training time per week.

Training	**Strength training**
1 night	Full programme
2 nights	Full programme
3 nights +	Full programme two sessions Remaining sessions two or three general exercises

Finishing a training session

In the same way that gymnasts are prepared for a training session by doing a warm-up, they will need to relax and recover from the work which has been demanding, both physically and mentally. Vigorous strengthening exercises normally performed at the end of the session will not achieve this and so it is advantageous to finish as a group in a relaxed and happy manner. Sessions should end, therefore, with breathing exercises and simple stretching and curling movements. At the same time this gives the opportunity to talk to the gymnasts about the evening's training, its successes and failures, and about future club commitments, thereby establishing a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in which to close the session.

The exercises suggested for strengthening are a very brief guide to this extensive subject. For further information, refer to an excellent book by John Hogg called Land Conditioning for Competitive Swimming, the contents of which are very valuable to those taking part in sports acrobatics.

7

Composition of Competitive Routines

Pairs and Groups

In sports acrobatics two routines are required, one involving balance elements, the second tempo elements. Major international competition requires a third routine containing elements from both categories. Routines are marked out of ten and the International Federation for Sports Acrobatics has devised a code of points which explains how this is arrived at. A basic difficulty mark is arrived at by including in the routine a specific number of individual and pair/group elements. Elements are graded A, Band C and competitors submit details of their exercises to the judges prior to the competition, so that a tariff mark may be agreed in accordance with the level of difficulty therein. The exercise is then judged out of this tariff, marks being deducted for technical and compositional faults. It would seem, therefore, that to achieve a tariff mark of ten would be of prime importance, but it must always be borne in mind that the final mark for an exercise of a lesser tariff can be higher than the tariff ten exercise if it is sound and technically well executed, while the latter contains too many technical and compositional faults due to the performance of difficult elements with insufficient preparation.

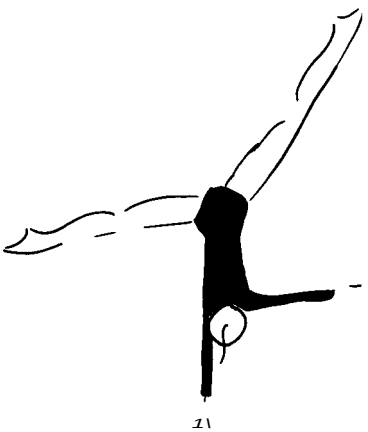
When deciding which balance and tempo elements to select for the routine it is important to ensure that the elements are varied so that they do not resemble one another in appearance.

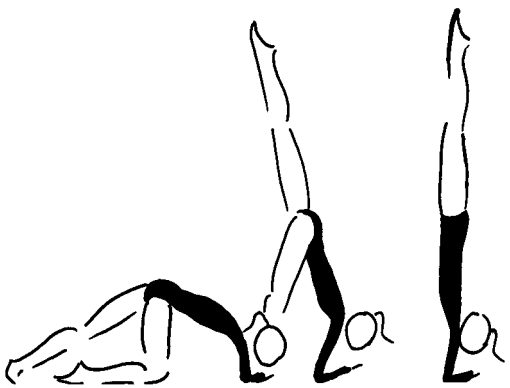
In addition to balance and tempo elements, choreographic and individual elements such as linking movements and walk-overs, handsprings, etc. are required. In addition to being graded A, Band C, the individual elements are divided into groups. The construction of a routine must contain elements from the following types, as shown in the example opposite.

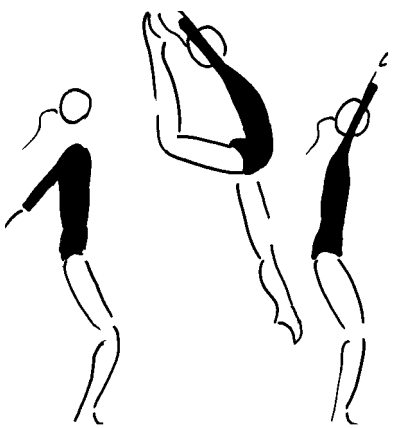
Stands	Aerials	Walk-overs	Flexibilities
Arabesque	Free walk-over	Backward walk-over	Splits
Choreographies	**Springs**	**Combinations**	
Ring jump (jump from two feet to touch the head with one foot)	Handsprings	Round-off, back flip, backward tucked somersault	

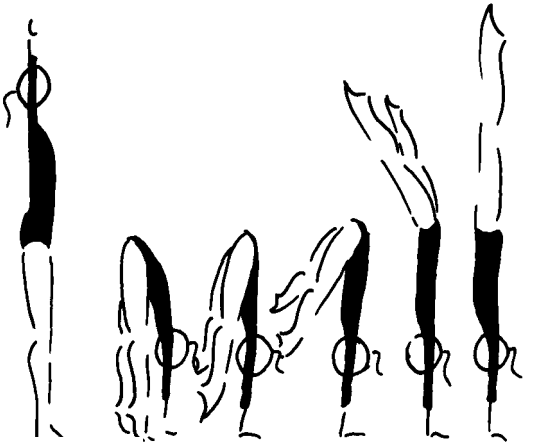
The code will state how many elements are required for basic difficulty: usually a minimum of three, each of which must be chosen from a different category. Remember also that the elements must be characteristic of the routine: for example, cartwheel, two back flips is a balance routine element as it commences from a stand, whilst the more dynamic round-off, back flip, somersault, which requires a run to initiate the skill, is a tempo routine element.

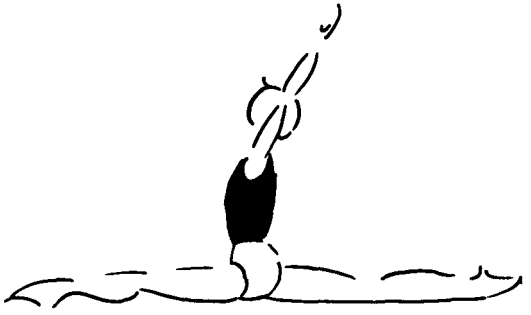
Some examples of individual elements, which can be included in the formation of the routine, are shown below and on the following pages:

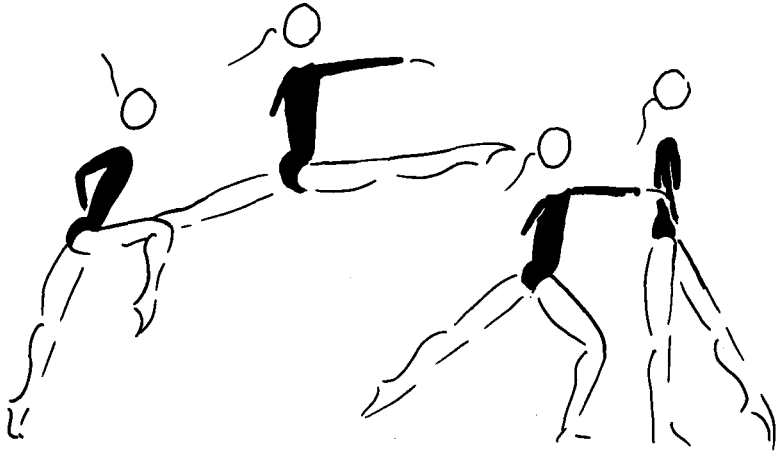


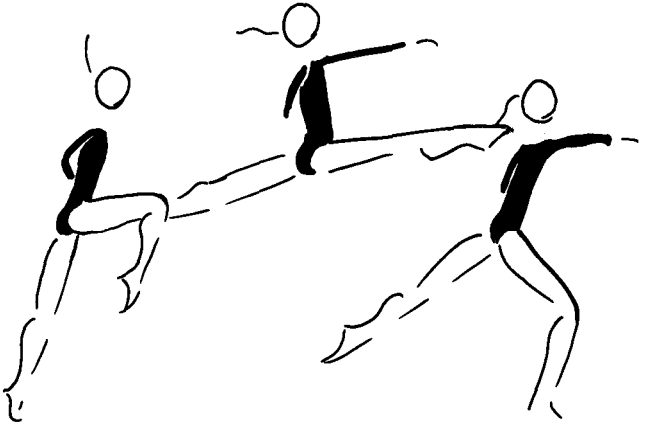


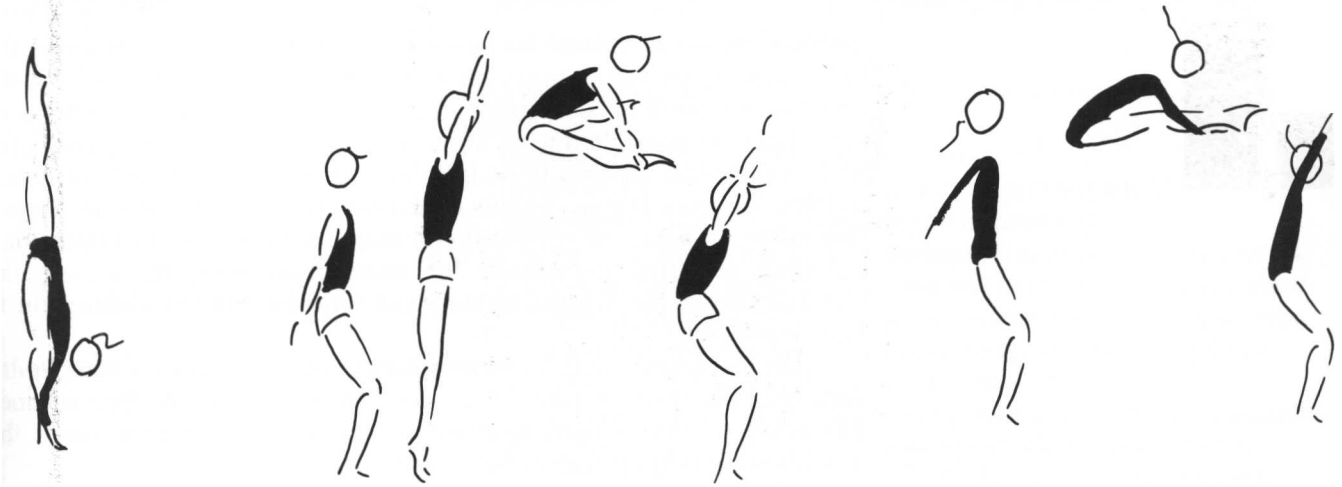












It will be helpful when practising the routine as a whole to remember that both technical and compositional faults are divided into three categories, some examples of which are:

Technical

1	Minor faults	0.10-0.20	Slight fault in landing, e.g. one step to gain balance
2	Significant faults	0.30-0.40	Significant loss of balance in landing, e.g. up to two steps
3	Serious faults	a 0.50	More than two steps after landing or fall onto one knee
		b 1.00	Fall where the weight is taken on both hands. Less than the required amount of pair or group elements [generally five but depends on standard of competition)

Compositional

1	Minor faults	0.10	Uneven distribution of difficulty elements
2	Significant faults	0.20	Noticeable lack of harmony between partners
3	Serious faults	0.30	Complete lack of harmony between partners

It should be noted that as far as compositional faults are concerned the regulations allow for a maximum deduction of 0.50. In order to gain the best possible mark in competition, it is vital to try to eliminate as many of these faults as possible during training. This underlines the necessity for all gymnasts and coaches to be fully acquainted with the Code of Points ana any subsequent amendments which may be made by the International Federation. In domestic competition it must be noted that the regulations, including modified regulations for lower level competitions, are the responsibility of the organising body and must be made available prior to the competition.

In pair and group routines serious deductions are given for time faults. Each balance must be held for a specified time (three or four seconds depending on the section), and training the pair or group to count the seconds accurately is an essential requirement.

Selecting music for **the routine**

The choice of music contributes greatly to the success or otherwise of the competitive routine. There is an extremely wide and varied choice available, since any music other than vocal may be used, subject to the laws of copyright pertaining to performances.

The following points should be borne in mind when selecting the music:

1 It must suit the movements of the performers. Care must be taken not to choose music that is so slow that it is difficult to sustain the movements or to create interesting and varied choreography.

2 It should be complementary to the performance and not be merely background noise. The routine should be planned so that every movement and step has a place in the music. Remember in planning the routine to music to allow for all balances to be held for the length of time specified in the competition rules, otherwise time faults will be incurred.

3 It must be interesting, have colour, a good rhythm and, if possible, a change in tempo.

4 It should have a precise start and finish, the timing of the exercise commencing when the first movement is made. There is a time limit to comply with competition regulations and the music must be within these regulations.

5 It is important for competitors to be involved in selecting their own music, as it produces more feeling and expression in the exercise, giving better results.

Design of pair and group routines

In the preparation of the design of the routine, bear the following points in mind:

1 Floor area of 12m must be fully covered.
2 Create as many interesting and varied patterns as possible.
3 Space the balance/tempo elements and individual elements.
4 Linking movements need not be performed in unison throughout the routine, but can be performed by first one partner and then the other. If, however, totally different linkages are performed by the partners (which occurs more frequently with mixed pairs) these should be complementary, having some linking theme.
5 Use the partner in different ways, not just as a balance/tempo support, but by way of creating links, Le. somersault, dive forward roll or cartwheel over headstands in straddle position, forward rolls, etc.
6 Entries and exits to balance and tempo elements must be fluent. Lower partner should not prepare for the holding position too early.

Tumbling

Rules for competitive tumbling differ from those for pair and group work, although the general principle of two routines, made up of A, Band C elements, still applies.

The straight run

This first exercise is designed to demonstrate different types of somersault, Le. forward, backward and sideways. Only turns of 180' are permitted. The run must include three different somersaults and must end with a somersault.

The twisting run

In the second run turns of 180' and more will be evaluated. If a 180' turn has been used in the straight run, the same turn may not be used in the second run, although a different move involving a 180' turn will be allowed. Somersaults which do not include a twist are not evaluated. Once again the run must end with a somersault.

A springboard may be used for take-off in both runs.

Technical and compositional faults are divided into three categories, some examples of which follow:

Technical

1	Minor faults	0.10-0.20	Slight bends of elbows/knees when not required in the execution of an element
2	Significant faults	0.30-0.40	Poor height in somersaults. Up to three steps taken in landing
3	Serious faults	a 0.50	More than three steps in landing. More than 45° over- or under-spin in twisting elements
		b 1.00	Taking weight on the hands in landing

C*ompositional*

1	Minor faults	0.10	Loss of rhythm
2	Significant faults	0.20	Visible effort or tension
3	Serious faults	0.30	The majority of elements in the exercise performed with technical faults

The boundary of the tumbling track and the centre line should be marked as there are deductions for deviations from both.

8 Conclusion

What about the future?

The future of the sport rests entirely in the hands of the people responsible for its introduction to beginners.

The sport relies for success on one person's total commitment to another. As early pairing situations rarely continue for any length of time, due to increases in height and weight and changes in personality, the coach must ensure that each individual is correctly prepared at basic level.

The ability to work closely with others in a team should be established early, and this should not be on the basis of one partner, but of learning to work with many different partners in a group situation.

The length of time needed to acquire skill varies with each person, so teachers and coaches must always have a flexible and adaptable approach. The disciplining of the mind and body to the training programme is very important but the personality of the individual must not be lost in the process. In the final production of an advanced routine we should not have a team of robots, but a team of lively interesting people with different personalities, which can fuse together and work in pairs or groups as the situation demands.

For the performer there must always be give and take. Each individual must be prepared to leave personal problems behind and give full attention to training. At the same time if there is a serious personal problem other team members must not be unsympathetic. Early discipline, ensuring that if one member of a team is absent from training, the others attend and work on individual aspects, which are many, is very important. Also remember that when a skill is not successful it is not always the upper partner who is at fault, or the most dominant member of the team who is always right. Avoid arguments by discussing the matter sensibly and not being afraid to admit a fault. Coaches and performers must always look at the element as a whole for perfection: that is, after all, what the judge is looking for. The successful performance of any skill is when *all* participants do their own job correctly. It is the combination of team skill that wins the medals.

Therefore if the correct attitude is established towards training and the need to work and trust other people is developed in addition to having knowledge and understanding of the sport, a much higher standard of sports acrobatics will be achieved in the future.

USEFUL BOOKS AND ADDRESSES

Books

Arnold, E. and Stocks, B., EP Sport Men's Gymnastics (EP Publishing, 1979)
Coulton, [ill, EP Sport Women's Gymnastics (EP Publishing, 1977)
Hogg, John, Land Conditioning for Competitive Swimming (EP Publishing, 1972)

Addresses

British Amateur Gymnastics Association, 95 High Street, Slough, Berks SL11DH (controls sports acrobatics in Great Britain)
The Performing Right Society, 29-33 Berners Street, London W1P 4AA (for information on permission to use music in public performance)

Sports Acrobatics is an exciti ng sport, dema nd ing new dimensions in strength and mobility from its participants. It is thrilling for spectators and as there is so much variation in the sport it is ideal for the club and school situation. Whether you have a male, female or mixed membership there is a section or sections in which every individual can participate.

This book aims to show would-be coaches and participants how to prepare for the sport and a little of what is required at a more advanced level, when specialisation in one of the seven sections is desired. As a sport it can be enjoyed by everyone, from the individual, pair or group wishing to pursue the competitive side to eventual international representation, to the school or club using the sport as a method of involving people in a physical activity. At the same time it has great social value, as it offers the opportunity to work with other people as well as providing schools and clubs with exciting material for display work.

Jill Coulton, the National Coach for sports acrobatics in Great Brltain, has produced a carefully planned book outlining the essential aspects of the sport in a clear and imaginative way. The book contains all the essential information required by coaches and performers interested in starting the sport. The text is well illustrated with excellent sequence photographs and by Meg Warren's clear and. expressive diagrams ..