
Small Ribbon Patterns

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Performing with the ribbon is difficult for both the beginner and the advanced rhythmic gymnast. As a teacher and gymnast, I have encountered many of the problems facing young students today so I prepared a series of questions and answers I hope will be beneficial to both teacher and student.

How does one grip the ribbon stick?

To achieve good ribbon technique one should begin with the ribbon stick grip. Hold the stick as if you are writing or drawing with a pen or pencil. The end of the ribbon stick should be hidden in the palm of the hand.

Place the palm face up with the end of the stick in the middle of the base of the palm. Lightly wrap the little and ring fingers around the stick. The stick will naturally lie between the middle finger and thumb. Place the index finger on top of the stick, making the ribbon stick an extension of the index finger and ultimately, an extension of the whole arm. The student is ready to learn small ribbon techniques.

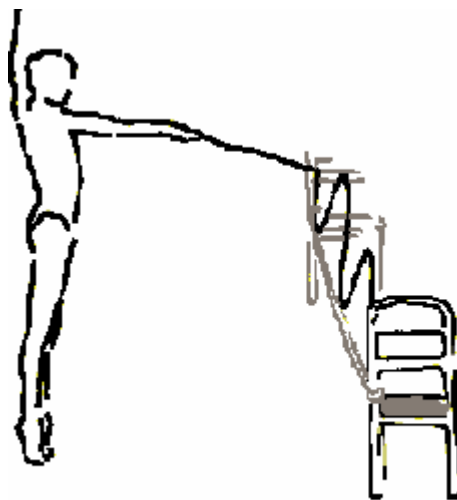
What joints of the arm are used to execute ribbon movements?

Big ribbon patterns (swing, big circles) = Shoulder

Medium patterns (medium circles, figure 8 circles) = Elbow

Small patterns (snakes, spirals) = Wrist

Should the elbow be bent or straight during small patterns?



When moving the ribbon across the body (as in spirals or snakes) slightly bend the elbow. Bend the elbow when performing pirouettes. On all other patterns try to keep the elbow straight. But, on small patterns, make sure that the arm is not stiff and rigid, but relaxed.

Should an emphasis be placed on inward or outward spirals?

Nothing is wrong with an inward spiral, but it is easier for a beginner to start with an outward spiral. Eventually, the student must be good at both.

How is an even ribbon pattern achieved during spirals and snakes?

Cut a hole in a piece of cardboard or plywood 18-24 inches wide. Stand the board on end. Use only the ribbon stick, no ribbon. Place the ribbon stick in the middle of the hole and use the edges of the hole as a template. Try this method slowly then gradually speed up. Don't forget to use the wrist, NOT THE ELBOW. Make sure the wrist is down.

To learn snakes, separate two chairs and tie a rope between them about two feet off the floor. Face the rope and try to move the ribbon up and down using the proper motion. For horizontal snakes place two folded mats two feet apart and attempt the snakes between them. For a horizontal snake above the head use a folded mat and the wall. Move the stick from the wall to the mat and back as if painting a ceiling with the ribbon as your brush. First paint the ceiling then the wall, then the floor.



Are there other ways to improve ribbon technique?

To improve small and big ribbon patterns try the following: Use two ribbons simultaneously. Try to execute the same pattern with both hands, i.e. vertical snakes or vertical spirals. Next, combine simple patterns with both hands such as circles and small patterns (snakes or spirals). Finally, try opposite patterns. One hand doing snakes, the other spirals. Eventually, add simple dance steps such as skips, waltz and chasse.

To strengthen the arms: Use two ribbons on the same stick. If the student is too advanced for the two ribbon exercise, try increasing the length of the single ribbon. A junior would use the senior size and a senior can add an extra meter to the length of the old ribbon. Remember to return to the normal size ribbon before competitions. Use of the longer ribbon is great for small patterns and increasing the awareness of the ribbon end.

COACHES: Please submit your conditioning ideas to the Reebok Coaching Corner, c/o USA Gymnastics, Pan American Plaza, 201 S. Capitol Ave., Suite 300, Indianapolis, IN 46225.

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