

# Unit 37: Circus Manipulation

Unit code:	H/502/5380
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

## ● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop the technical and artistic skills required to create and perform circus manipulation skills.

## ● Unit introduction

Learning manipulation skills, which include juggling, diabolo, devil sticks, cigar boxes and hats, is a fun and rewarding challenge, and some people find them so gripping that they become completely absorbed in the activities and the challenges they pose. This is an excellent opportunity to improve coordination, discipline and focus which are skills that apply to most performing arts techniques. It is not enough to just carry out the technical skills in a display, so learners will explore how to create a routine that has performance qualities and artistic value.

This unit focuses on a range of manipulation skills. Audiences are often impressed by these skills as they cannot imagine how performers are managing to do what they are doing. As well as using these skills to create stand-alone acts, they can be incorporated into dance, musical and physical theatre performances. By developing an understanding of how to use the techniques within a performance and how to create such a routine learners will have acquired an exciting new range of skills. Circus skills are found to be an appealing challenge as the outcomes are easily measurable. A newly-learned skill is a clear indication of the progress that learners have made.

As well as learning new skills within this unit, learners will experiment with applying these skills within performance material and will develop an understanding of the equipment that is used. Due to the nature of the unit, health and safety also forms an important part of the learning. On completion of this unit, learners should be able to create and maintain a safe rehearsal space and show manipulation skills through demonstration and the creation of a performance routine which incorporates a number of tricks. This should aid learners in developing a disciplined approach that will serve them well, increasing their skill levels within both the circus units and a range of other units that require a disciplined approach.

**Each learner will be assessed on at least two creative performances, lasting a minimum of three minutes in which they incorporate at least three different manipulation skills.**

## ● Learning outcomes

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

- 1 Be able to adopt a disciplined approach to learning manipulation skills
- 2 Be able to demonstrate manipulation skills
- 3 Be able to select and organise manipulation skills into a performance.

# Unit content

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## 1 Be able to adopt a disciplined approach to learning manipulation skills

*Equipment:* health and safety considerations; storage; maintenance

*Training:* target setting; remaining motivated; independence; evaluation; responsiveness to feedback

## 2 Be able to demonstrate manipulation skills

*Ball juggling:* cascade; columns; shower; body moves; four balls – fountain and column, passing (four count pattern)

*Club juggling:* cascade; double and triple spins; body moves; passing (four count pattern)

*Diablo:* spinning; throwing and catching; body moves; left and right stopover; cats cradle

*Devil stick:* half-flip; flip, throwing and catching; helicopter; body moves

*Hats:* body rolls; flips; tumbles; kick-ups and throw-ups

*Cigar boxes:* end turns; take-outs; centre box spins

*Staff:* figure of eight (one arm); body roll; pass behind back

*Club swinging:* full arm circles; forward and backward hand circles; crossfollow

*Spinning plates:* start with both hands; balance; spin on finger; throw and catch

## 3 Be able to select and organise manipulation skills into a performance

*Process:* selection of and fusion of different skills; selection of material; sequencing of movements; application of character or theme; response to music; rehearsal; giving and responding to instructions

*Presentation:* focus; communication; interaction; skill; other performers

## Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
<b>P1</b> set targets and develop a disciplined approach to achieving them, with guidance [RL, SM]	<b>M1</b> set targets and develop a disciplined approach, with minimum guidance	<b>D1</b> set targets and develop a disciplined approach, with complete independence and professionalism
<b>P2</b> manipulate at least three different skills, with guidance [IE, TW, SM]	<b>M2</b> manipulate at least three objects, with minimum guidance	<b>D2</b> manipulate at least three objects, with a real sense of ease with complete independence and professionalism
<b>P3</b> select manipulation skills to create and rehearse a performance, with guidance [CT, RL, TW, SM, EP]	<b>M3</b> select manipulation skills to develop a creative performance piece, with minimum guidance	<b>D3</b> display a professional approach in selecting manipulation skills in the development of an inventive performance piece, with a sense of character or theme
<b>P4</b> perform in front of an audience using manipulation equipment and skills with few errors, maintaining focus most of the time. [RL, EP]	<b>M4</b> perform competently in front of an audience using manipulation equipment and skills, maintaining control and focus at all times.	<b>D4</b> perform in front of an audience using manipulation equipment and skills, demonstrating flow and ease, with complete focus and control of the skills, material and audience.

**PLTS:** This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

# Essential guidance for tutors

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## Delivery

The learning activities in this unit are wholly practical and should allow learners to develop skills and technical ability. Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through target setting and evaluation. Dedication to progress will be vital in learning manipulation skills as the tricks will require hours of rehearsal to master.

As part of developing a disciplined approach, learners will need to be introduced carefully to the equipment and given full guidance on treatment and storage. In keeping with professional approaches, sessions could be regarded as 'training', whereby learners are developing skills at their own pace. This will give them the opportunity to differentiate their work and to develop a disciplined and independent approach.

In order to acquire the necessary knowledge to make progress, it will be important for tutors to demonstrate a full range of skills and communicate the correct terminology for each exercise. During demonstrations, tutors should also identify potential risks and important safety considerations. Learners will also need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their exercises in order to build confidence and move towards incorporating the skills they are learning into practical performance work.

Learners should be given the time and support to develop performance material where they select and refine manipulation skills in a creative and expressive format, demonstrating an understanding of context and communicating themes, characters and story to an audience as well as the integration of other performance techniques or skills.

It may be useful to arrange an opportunity for learners to see a range of professional performances that includes manipulation tricks. Seeing the skills in context will motivate learners and make them aware of the professional opportunities that are available and the different approaches used by a variety of companies and performers. This could be through live performance such as visiting a touring circus company, local carnival or festival with street performers or on DVD/video resources. There is a wide range of performances on the internet.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to unit and structure of the programme – whole group.
<b>Assignment 1: Developing Manipulation Skills – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health and safety.</li><li>• Keeping a learning diary.</li><li>• What is manipulation?</li></ul>
Introduction to ball juggling/four count passing (P1, M1, D1).
Introduction to other manipulation skills (P1, M1, D1).
Discussion/breakdown of the unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clarify terminology</li><li>• how best to approach skills learning</li><li>• keeping notes.</li></ul>
Ball juggling progressions and other passing counts (1, 2 and 3) and patterns (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2).
Progressions for all other manipulation skills (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2).
<b>Assignment 2: Juggle/Vocal – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select a vocal piece (can be rhyme, lyrics, monologue, etc).</li><li>• Discuss 'drops' and how to stay focused.</li><li>• Discuss importance of entrance and exit.</li><li>• Devise and rehearse.</li><li>• Present to tutor and peers for evaluation although the emphasis will not be on performance, but the selection and development of skills.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 3: 1 Skill/1 Minute – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss criteria; perform one skill for exactly 1 minute.</li><li>• Discuss use of space and levels.</li><li>• Devise and rehearse.</li><li>• Present to tutor and peers for evaluation although the emphasis will not be on performance, but the selection and development of skills.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 4: 'Expectation' – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss criteria.</li><li>• Discuss use of other skills (equilibratics, dance, acro etc).</li><li>• Inclusion of entrance/exit, space, levels.</li><li>• Devise and rehearse.</li><li>• Present to tutor and peers for evaluation and verbal feedback.</li></ul>

## Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

### Assignment 5: Preparation for Final Performance – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

Discuss final assignment brief:

- clarify grading criteria
- set pared down version of main assignment – 1 equilibristics and 1 manipulation skill
- devise and rehearse
- present to tutor and peers for evaluation and verbal feedback.

### Assignment 5: Final Performance – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

Discuss final assignment brief

- clarify grading criteria
- devise and rehearse
- present to tutor for evaluation and verbal feedback.

Feedback to and from peers.

## Assessment

Learners will be expected to demonstrate their dedication to learning manipulation skills. They will be assessed on their target setting, commitment to training and progress. An appropriate way to assess this would be a circus practice diary that logs the skills that have been practised and the progress towards targets. Other means of assessment would be observation notes made by the tutor, video diaries or video footage of learners' approach to training.

Learners must demonstrate their manipulation skills in a minimum of three areas (juggling, club juggling, Diablo, Club Swinging, devil stick, hats, staff, cigar boxes or plate spinning). Learners who are working at a pass level may still need a certain amount of input and guidance and they should be able to demonstrate at least one basic trick in each skill area but may still be at the stage where they are dropping objects. Learners working at distinction level will work in an independent manner and should be able to demonstrate at least two tricks in each skill area with a sense of ease and complete control. The evidence for this criterion is likely to take the form of video footage.

Learners must create and present at least two short creative performances that incorporate the manipulation skills they have learned. They have the option to create a solo or group performance and the length should reflect the number of learners in the group. A basic guideline would be a minimum of three minutes per performer. The final performance must be shown to an audience. Learners must develop a performance that has a clear theme, storyline or sense of character. The evidence for these criteria is likely to take the form of video footage.

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	Developing Manipulation Skills	This would form the early part of delivery where learners would be introduced to the different equipment and guidance on using them safely is to be emphasised. To begin with the focus would be on establishing ball juggling skills and few count passing. Learners would then be introduced to a wide variety of equipment where the expectation is that they try everything out and try and develop some skills in them all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion.</li> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video at stages throughout the unit for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> </ul>
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	Juggle/Vocal	This is to develop learners' ability to do more than one thing at a time. They are to select a piece of text (could be a poem, lyrics, nursery rhyme), learn it and perform a juggling routine whilst reciting it. Tutor should emphasise the importance of dealing with 'drops' calmly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video process at least twice for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> <li>• Reflective discussion to evaluate at the end.</li> </ul>
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	1 Skill/1 Minute	Learners are to select one piece of equipment and create a one minute performance using it. This can be done in collaboration with the Equilibristics unit. The tutor should cover the use of levels, performance devices, music, props and costume. The focus will not be on the final performance but the development process. There will be time for reflection and evaluation at the end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video process at least twice for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> <li>• Reflective discussion to evaluate at the end.</li> </ul>



Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	Expectation	This is an opportunity to introduce the concept of developing a rounded performance by learners exploring integrating different performance skills with manipulation ie dance, acting, acrobatics, manipulation. Again, the focus will not be on the final performance but the development process. There will be time for reflection and evaluation at the end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video process at least twice for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> <li>• Reflective discussion to evaluate own and peers' work at the end.</li> </ul>
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Preparation for Final Performance	The focus should now be shifting to creating more polished performances as the learners' abilities and confidence have grown. Learners are to integrate equilibristics and manipulation skills to create a full performance lasting at least three minutes. They can work in pairs or a small group. They should focus on the clarity of skills, integration within a theme or context, costumes, music, character and the use of any other performance skills. They must ensure that they perform using at least three different pieces of equilibristics equipment during the performance. There will be reflective discussion at the end where tutor and peers will offer constructive criticism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video process at least twice for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> <li>• Discussion.</li> <li>• Learners could keep a logbook detailing how they developed their performance but it is not essential.</li> <li>• Formal summative feedback to be provided to learners.</li> </ul>

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Final Performance	Learners are to create a final performance building on what they developed and/or learned in the previous assignment. Learners should choose a theme or context and should create a polished performance. They can perform in a pair or small group if they wish but they must ensure that they perform using at least three different pieces of equilibristics equipment for at least 3 minutes of it. There will be time to reflect and evaluate at the end of the performances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A.</li> <li>• Observation (video process at least twice for reflection and assessment purposes).</li> <li>• Discussion.</li> <li>• Learners could keep a logbook detailing how they developed their performance but it is not essential.</li> <li>• Formal summative feedback to be provided to learners.</li> </ul>

## Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Performing Arts Individual Repertoire and Showcase	Performing Dance	Musical Theatre Performance
		Circus Acrobatics
		Circus Aerial
		Circus Manipulation
		Applying Physical Theatre
		Choreographic Principles

This unit also has links with the following National Occupational Standards:

Live Events and Promotion

- HS1 – Working safely
- HS5 – Controlling risks.

## Essential resources

In order to deliver this unit, centres will need an appropriate rehearsal space, and equipment. The amount of equipment will depend on the number of learners but the following must be available: juggling balls and clubs (at least four per learner), devil sticks, Diablos, hats, staffs, cigar boxes and spinning plates. Centres will also need to carefully consider the suitability of their room in terms of the ceiling height for juggling, Diablo, devil stick and plate-spinning practice. For the purposes of collecting evidence, centres will require a video recorder and playback equipment. Learners need to wear appropriate clothing for practical participation.

## Employer engagement and vocational contexts

There are a number of traditional and contemporary circus companies throughout the UK which the centre may be able to link with either to deliver the unit or offer to industry information and/or support such as talks, tours, discounted performances, workshops and possibly work experience.

## Indicative reading for learners

### Textbooks

Benge K and Henley T – *The Art of Juggling* (Dube 1984) ISBN 9780917643019

Dancey C – *Charlie Dancey's Compendium of Club Juggling* (Butterfingers, 1995) ISBN 9781898591146

Dancey C – *Charlie Dancey's Encyclopaedia of Ball Juggling* (Butterfingers, 1994) ISBN 9781898591139

Ernest J – *Contact Juggling* (Butterfingers, 1997) ISBN 9781898591153

Finnigan D – *Diabolo Step by Step* (Butterfingers, 1993) ISBN 9780951324042

Grant D – *Diabolo 2: Crazy Cradles and Baffling Body Moves: More Advanced Diabolo Techniques* (Circus Stuff, 1993) ISBN 9780952030010

Irving R and Martins M – *Pathways in Juggling: Learn How to Juggle with Balls, Rings, Clubs, Devil Sticks, Diabolos and Other Objects* (Firefly Books Ltd, October 1997) ISBN 9781850768210

### Video

Cirque du Soleil – *We Reinvent The Circus* (ASIN B00004CXXZ)

Firetoys – *The Diabology Double DVD* (ASIN B000VBRUU6)

Green Umbrella Production – *The Complete Teach Yourself Juggling Video with Haggis McLeod* (ASIN B00008T42S)

### Journals

*Kaskade – European Juggling Magazine*

*King Pole Magazine*

*The World's Fair*

## Websites

[www.cirquebijou.co.uk](http://www.cirquebijou.co.uk)

[www.firetoys.co.uk](http://www.firetoys.co.uk)

[www.giffordscircus.com](http://www.giffordscircus.com)

[www.juggling.org](http://www.juggling.org)

[www.juggling.tv](http://www.juggling.tv)

[www.les7doigtsdelamain.com](http://www.les7doigtsdelamain.com)

[www.nofitstate.org](http://www.nofitstate.org)

[www.simplycircus.com](http://www.simplycircus.com)

[www.swampcircus.com](http://www.swampcircus.com)

Cirque Bijou

Firetoys

Giffords Circus

Juggling Information Service

Juggling TV

The Seven Fingers

No Fit State

Simply Circus

Swamp Circus

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	learning new tricks on the different equipment
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	selecting manipulation equipment and tricks to create a routine applying a theme or context to their performance material selecting appropriate music/costume for their performance performing their routine
<b>Reflective learners</b>	setting new targets for own practice and development selecting manipulation equipment and tricks to create a routine performing their routine
<b>Team workers</b>	selecting manipulation equipment and tricks to create a routine learning and practising passing tricks working in a pair or small group to create performance material performing their routine
<b>Self-managers</b>	selecting manipulation equipment and tricks to create a routine setting targets for own development and practice rehearsing performance routines
<b>Effective participators</b>	learning new skills in class performing a range of routines, both individual acts and within a larger performance.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	undertaking extra research into ideas and themes
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	evaluating their own skills and performance work on a regular, informal basis through discussion
<b>Reflective learners</b>	being supportive to their peers through constructive comments and feedback
<b>Team workers</b>	practicing and rehearsing in own time to improve their skills and development
<b>Self-managers</b>	undertaking extra research into ideas and themes.

## ● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>ICT – Find and select information</b>	
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	watching video performances as part of their research into performance ideas and/or approaches on the internet through sites such as <a href="http://youtube.com/juggle.tv">youtube.com/juggle.tv</a>
<b>English</b>	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	<p>learning new moves and skills</p> <p>developing ideas for performance material</p> <p>evaluating their own and others' work, reflecting on strengths and weaknesses.</p>