

UPSWING

Circus at Home



Introduction

Circus Skills aren't just for kids - they can be a great way to stay mobile and mentally active while having fun. We want to share some of the games and activities that we have adapted for people who might not think circus is for them. This handbook has been created to inspire you and to enable you.

You can do all of these activities at home. They can be done seated and as your confidence and skills improve and if you feel like it, you can develop your skills standing up. These activities are meant to be done multiple times as there is always room to learn more, to gain confidence and to improve.

Circus skills offer new challenges; it is ok to get things wrong. The goal is to try something new. It will take a bit of practice to get really skillful so stick on some music and have some fun!



How to Use this Guide

The guide includes simple circus practices to try at home. Whilst practice makes perfect when it comes to Circus – please always be mindful to take things at your own pace and listen to your body.

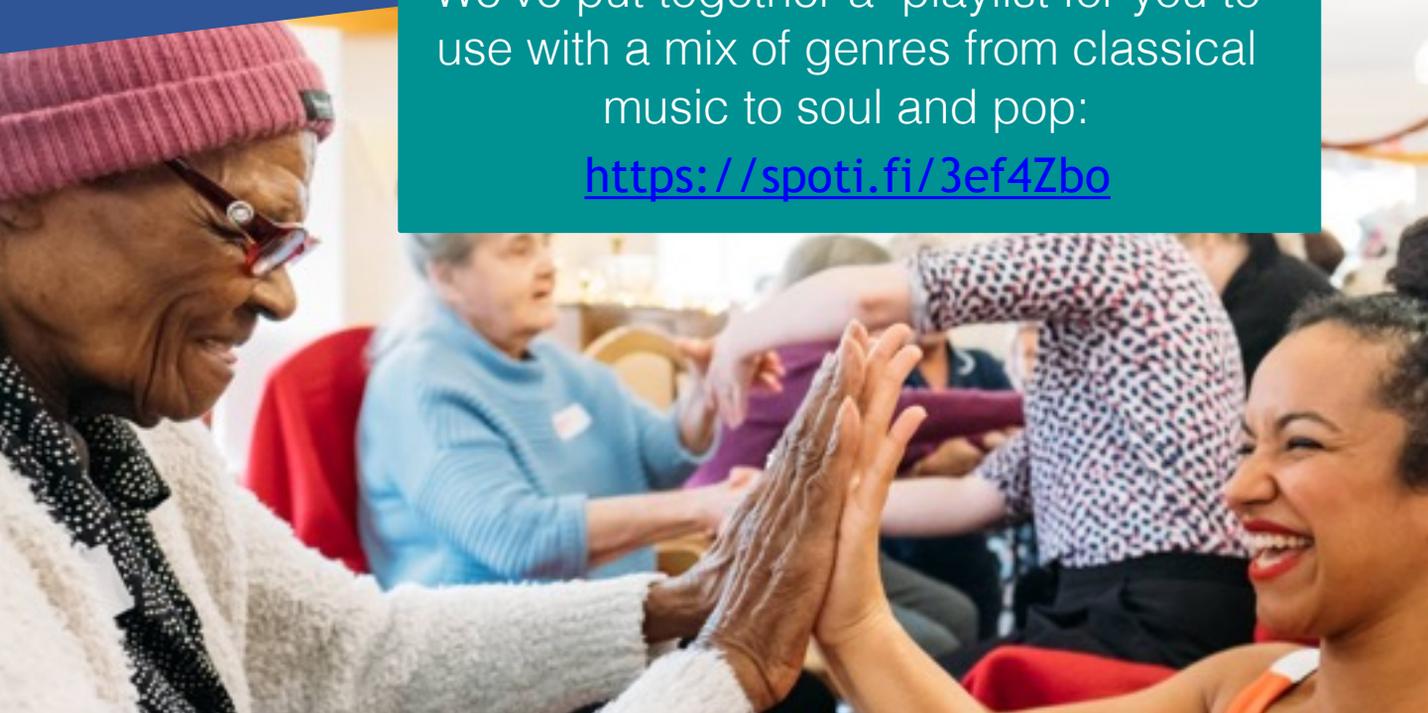
Juggling and object balancing will involve a few dropped balls or props. If your mobility mean you would find it difficult to pick up dropped objects try sitting on a sofa or at your dining table to reduce the need to bend over and pick up fallen objects.

If something doesn't feel right, you may need to scale back or stop what you are doing and take a break.

Remember – practice makes perfect, but perfect takes time.

We've put together a playlist for you to use with a mix of genres from classical music to soul and pop:

<https://spoti.fi/3ef4Zbo>



About Upswing

Upswing is a leading contemporary circus company. We use the human body as an expressive tool to entertain, inspire curiosity and ignite a desire to build connection.

Upswing creates shows that blend this amazing art form with physical theatre, acrobatics and memorable music to create fresh experiences with narrative punch. We are an award-winning company and committed to creating unexpected and world-class experiences for the people wherever we meet them.

We are passionate about expanding the possibilities of circus not only as an art form but as an evolving and adaptive set of practices that can help us imagine and shape the world we want to live in.

Through our productions and creative engagement programmes, we aim to unite people from different backgrounds – audiences, artists and participants all come together to uncover the extraordinary potential in humans and create the new stories that can connect us as communities.

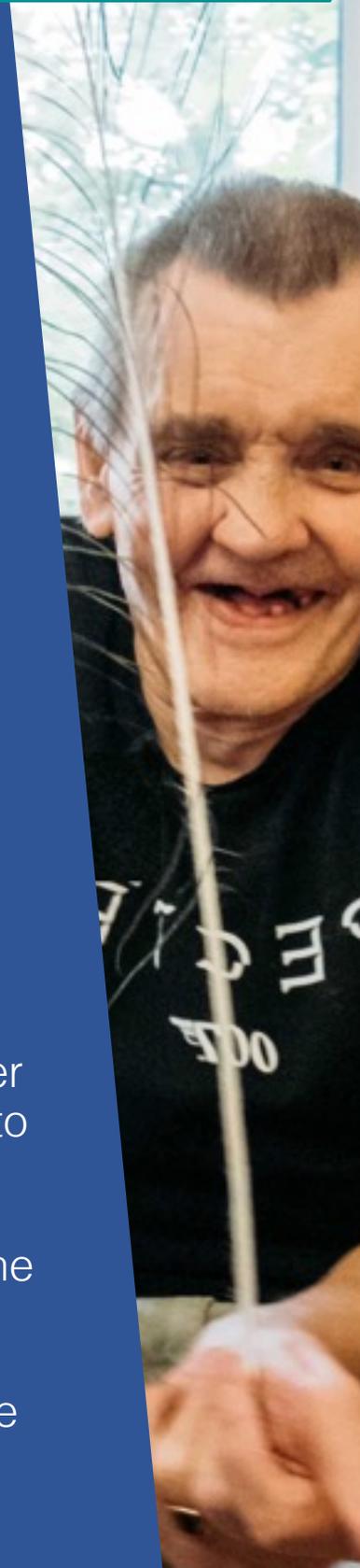


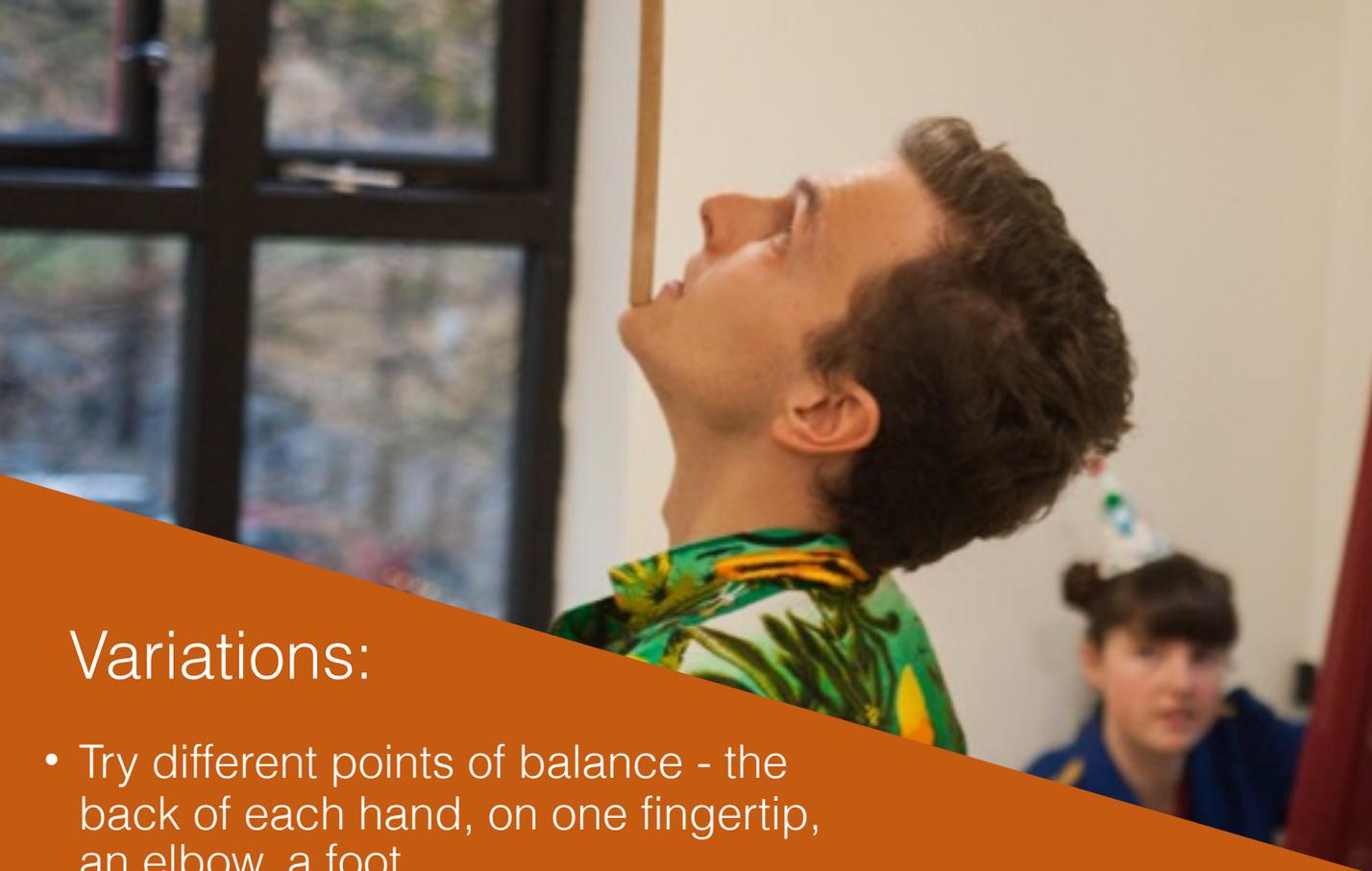
Balancing Objects

Object balancing helps build hand-eye coordination, balance, body and spatial awareness as it requires you to co-ordinate your movements to keep the object upright!

It is actually harder to balance small objects (such as pencils) than larger objects (a wooden spoon, a card board tube or bamboo garden canes). Peacock feathers are ideal. If you have them or you can even attach a balloon to the top of a stick.

- Place the object on your outstretched hand, with your palm facing upwards. The object should be pointing upwards as vertically as possible. Steady it with your other hand.
- Gently let go with your other hand so the object is now standing upright.
- If it tips to the left, your hand should slowly move to the left to counterbalance.
- You need to gently move your hand to counter whichever direction the feather is falling. Try to move smoothly and not jerk the object.
- The secret to balancing objects is to watch the top of the object. Watching the top of the object gives more visual clues about the direction it will fall to help the brain coordinate your hand to keep the object upright.





Variations:

- Try different points of balance - the back of each hand, on one fingertip, an elbow, a foot
- Try passing the object from one hand to the other hand. You will need to give the object a little pop to jump across (remember to keep your fingers closed tight against each other and the hand open).
- If you get good you can try making it jump from hand to foot.
- If you are stable enough - try standing up with the feather balanced on the hand.
- If you are confident - try and balance on your chin (be careful with your neck and don't balance anything on your nose as it could slip and fall into your mouth or eye).
- If you are confident enough you can take a little walk with the object balanced on your hand. Make sure that you have a clear space and that you have checked for trip and slip hazards or anything you might walk into in advance. Remember - your focus will be more on the object than your environment.

One Ball Juggling Games

You need a small, soft juggling ball: you can make your own by balling up a pair of socks, filling a balloon with rice or using a tangerine (it makes a lovely snack for afterwards).

If you have limited mobility in your hands and can't grip a small ball you can try the starred exercises (below) using a light football or beach ball instead.

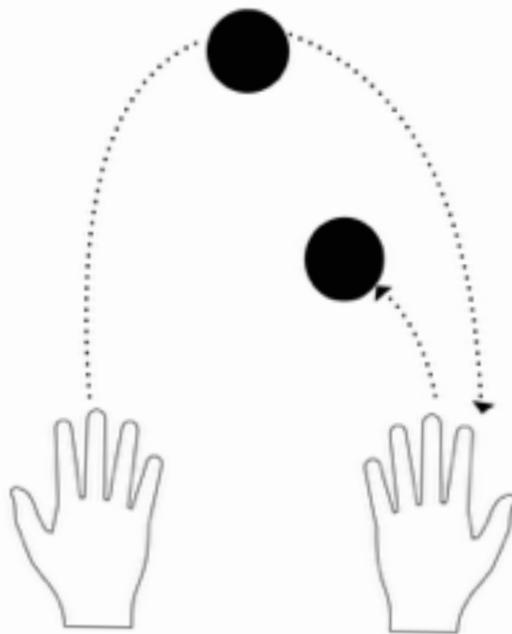
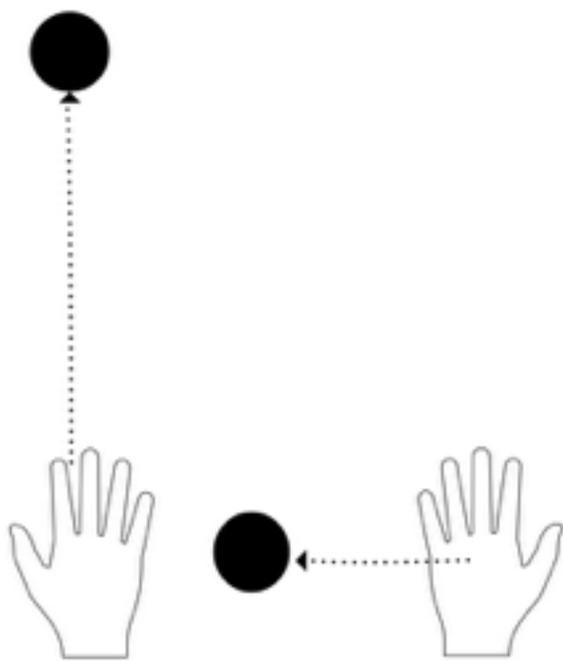
- Hold onto the juggling ball feeling its weight, squeezing the ball and rolling it between your hands.*
- Try balancing the juggling ball on different parts of your body: your head, elbow, back of your hand, on your foot, the top of your head.*
- Throw the ball up in the air with your right hand and catch the ball with the same hand. Try and get the ball at least as high as your forehead and to keep your arm at a right angle. Try with you left hand.



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One Ball Juggling Games *continued...*

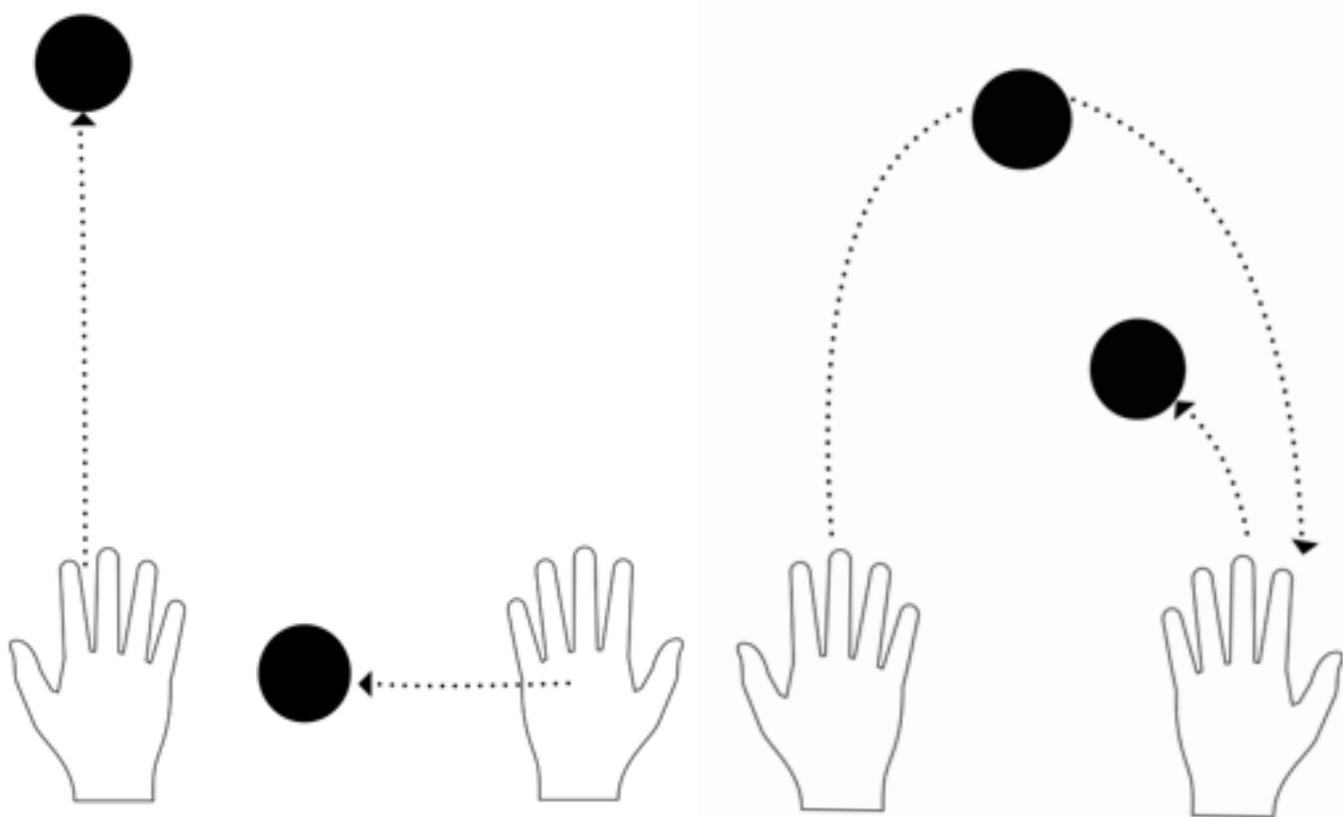
- Try a basic Toss. Throw the ball from your left hand to your right and back again in a gentle arc, aiming for the height of the top of your head or a little higher. Don't reach up to grab the ball, but let it come down to your hand.
- Throw the ball back and forth between your hands. Try and see if you can clap your hands before you catch the ball. Try and find a rhythm. A technique to make juggling smoother is to scoop, or dip, your hand before tossing the ball. Keep the dip shallow though.
- Throw and catch the ball with both hands, low then higher. See how many times you can clap your hands before you catch the ball.*
- Throw and catch the ball with both hands and tap your left hand on your head, shoulder, knee before you catch the ball. You can throw the ball higher and try to build up a sequence or rhythm of claps and throws.*
- Try throwing the ball under or over a leg or an arm and catching it with the same hand (or both hands if using the beach ball)*
- Throw the ball with you right hand, tap your head or knee with you right hand as you catch the ball with your left. Continue by throwing the ball with your left hand, tap your left hand on your head or knee and you catch the ball with your right, and repeat.



Two Ball Juggling Games

- Start with one ball in each hand. Throw both balls straight up in the air at the same time and catch each one with the same hand.
- Hold one ball in each hand. Throw both balls into the air then cross your right hand over your left to catch each ball with the opposite hand.
- Hold one ball in each hand. Throw the ball from your left hand towards you right in an arc, as it passes your forehead pass the ball in your right hand to you left.
- Place one ball on the floor to practice scooping. This is a technique to make juggling smoother. Simply move your hand with the ball inward and slightly dip the hand before tossing the ball - but keep the dip shallow. Practice dipping and tossing from one hand to another, trying to keep the arc of the ball at forehead level, until you find a regular rhythm.

Continued Overleaf



Two Ball Juggling Games *continued...*

Once you have mastered scooping it is time to try two balls at the same time!

- Holding two balls you start by throwing a ball from your right hand to your left. As the ball reaches the top of its arc, you throw the second ball in your left hand to your right. The hard part of juggling is not to panic and make a bad throw – keep calm! Catch the first ball in your left hand and then the second ball in your right. You are aiming for a ‘throw-throw-catch-catch’ rhythm.

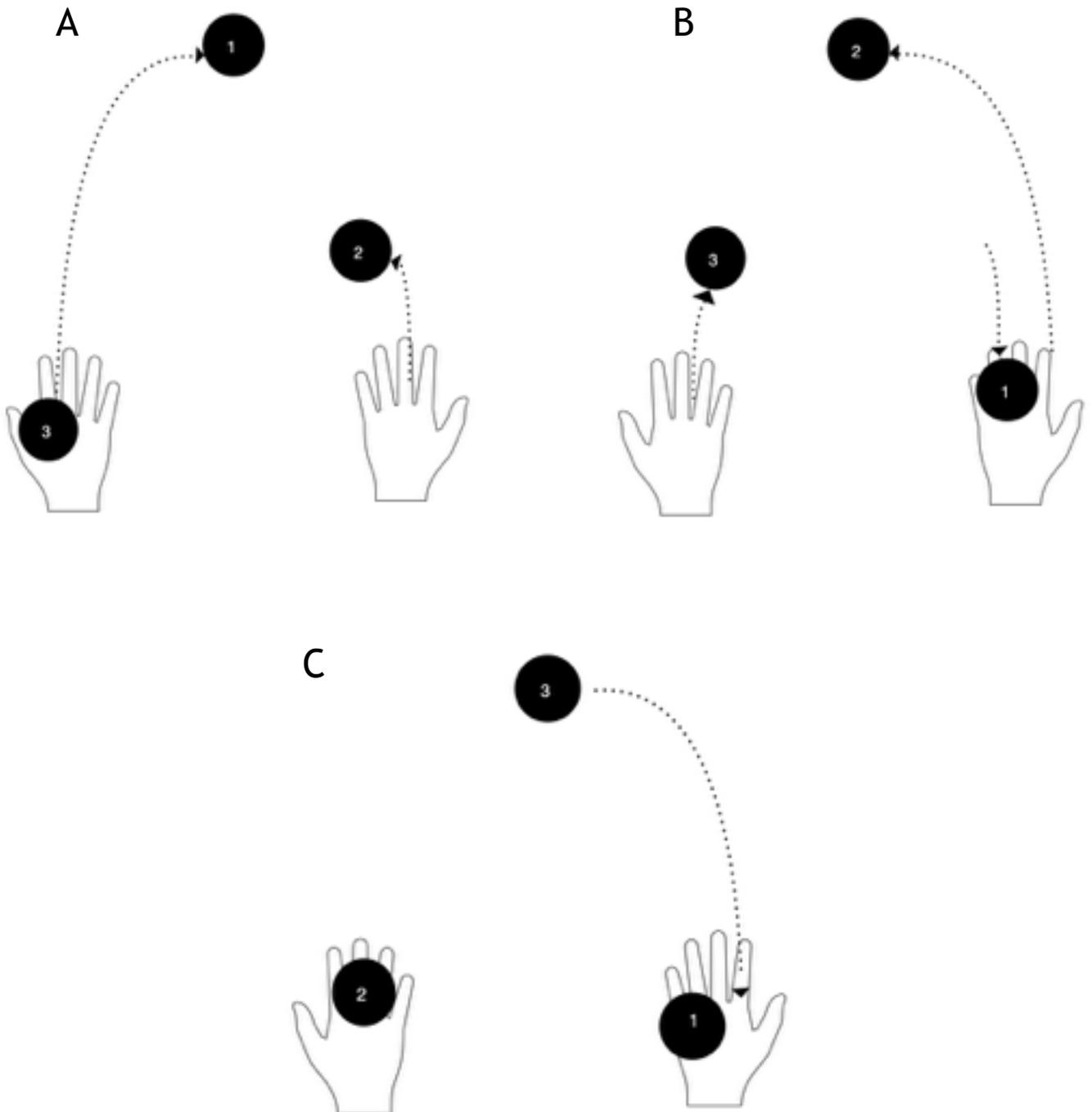
Juggling Three Balls

To be able to make three passes in a row - start slowly. Juggling is often a matter of understanding how the balls move in the air. You can practice the patterns by rolling the balls on an inclined tray table or you can work with light, small scarves. They fall more slowly so will give you the time with the scarves hanging in the air to react.

- First hold two balls in your dominant hand (left if you are left-handed and vice versa) and one in the other hand.
- Throw a pass with one of the balls in your dominant hand (ball 1)
- As ball 1 reaches the peak of its arc throw the ball in your weaker hand (ball 2) to your dominant hand. Fig A.
- As ball 2 reaches its peak you should be catching ball 1 in your weaker hand and immediately throwing ball 3 which is in your dominant hand under ball 2. Fig B.
- When ball 3 reaches the peak of its arc should be catching ball 2 in your dominant hand and then catch ball 3 in your weaker hand. Fig C.
- You should finish a pass with two balls in your weaker hand and one in you dominant hand.
- Now repeat in the other direction. Juggling is a simple pattern repeated over and over again.

For diagram – see overleaf...

Juggling Three Balls



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