

Levels and Prerequisites Information - American Youth Circus Organization

We have found that people have different ideas about what “beginner” “intermediate” and “advanced” levels means. We hope to create consistency for our events by offering this guideline. It is our intention to enforce the levels and pre-requisites for each workshop in order to preserve the integrity of the lesson plan of the workshop leader, and the learning goals of the student. We have clear levels and pre-requisites set out for tumbling, partner acrobatics, and aerial apparatus. For other disciplines we have itemized what constitutes beginner, intermediate, and advanced with a general description of the traits of a student at each level, and you'll find that there are additional pre-requisites listed on the online schedule as per the workshop leader's request.

Why do I need to sign up for workshops with the right pre-requisites and at the appropriate level?

At past festivals we have not had a system in place to diagnose or regulate levels. Many people went to workshops where they did not have the proper skill level. Workshop leaders could not teach what they had prepared, the people who had the appropriate skills were not able to learn anything new, and those who were not quite ready felt overwhelmed. We believe that by implementing this system we will be taking a step towards keep everything fair to participants at all levels, and to workshop leaders who have worked hard to prepare their classes. By making certain everyone goes to workshops at their level we can make sure that no one causes harm to themselves or others and create a physically and emotionally safe environment for all.

Open Level workshops and Discussions

Many workshops are designated “open level”. This means the workshop is intended to meet participants where they are in terms of skill level and artistry and is open to all. Discussion based workshops are also available and do not have physical pre-requisites.

Pre-requisites

This year we are strongly enforcing the prerequisites for many workshops in order to create a positive learning environment for participants, and a successful teaching environment for coaches. Sched.org has all of the workshops and pre-requisites for you to view at your leisure. You will find the pre-requisites for each workshop by clicking on the specific workshop you would like to see and scrolling down to the bottom of the page where it says prerequisites.

At the beginning of each workshop you will be asked to demonstrate the pre-requisites for that workshop as the warm up. If you attend a workshop with prerequisites and it is clear that you are not at the appropriate level, you will be kindly asked to leave and a work study member will help you switch to a workshop that is suitable for your level that still has spaces left. This is for your safety and the safety of those around you. If there is a workshop you would like to take but you don't have the prerequisites, you are encouraged to work on those skills in the months leading up to the festival with your circus teachers, parents, or coaches. If you have questions about prerequisites for a workshop, please feel free to contact our programming director Blain at Blain@circusconservatory.org and he will help you get in touch with the workshop leader offering that session.

General Levels

Beginner Student:

- May have either worked with this discipline a couple of times before, or never tried it before.
- If they have been introduced to basic skills and can execute them, they do not yet show consistency, grace, or form.
- Needs a fair amount of attention because they lack the awareness to know when they are safe and when they are not.

Intermediate Student:

- Mastered many basic level skills, and is working on improving form and gaining strength.
- May have strength or flexibility limitations, but they will be aware of them at this stage. Have been introduced to more difficult skills, but have not mastered them.
- Should be able to perform basic skills with minimal supervision; this level expects a certain level of maturity and dedication.
- Should still receive close supervision when working on new skills.

Advanced Student:

- Execute basic and intermediate skills flawlessly, and should have no serious gaps in either strength or flexibility
- May have moments of poor form, but are generally aware enough to correct and monitor these on their own.
- Working towards tricks that require exceptional timing, strength or flexibility, and that may be dangerous if executed poorly.
- Have proven their dedication to their teachers and have the maturity to keep themselves (and others) safe without direct supervision.
- Have the awareness of when to ask for help or spotting.

**AYCO Festival Workshop Levels:
Skill Standard Checklist for Circus Disciplines**

Discipline: TUMBLING

Beginner:

Note: We understand that some beginners will be completely new to tumbling hence unable to demonstrate the below pre-requisites. If this is the case, please only practice pre-requisites that you have learned from a trusted teacher.

- Forward roll to standing without using hands
- Cartwheel on both sides with no particular grace or style
- Backward roll
- Hold a bridge, 5 seconds
- Kick up to handstand

Intermediate:

Any of the novice skills plus:

- Straight-legged cartwheel on both sides
- Round off
- Backbend / limber from standing down to ground

- Hold handstand, 5 seconds
- Handstand forward roll

Advanced:

All of the novice and intermediate skills plus:

- Front handspring
- Round off back handspring
- Back extension roll handstand
- Hold handstand, 10 seconds

*Tumbling contributed by Chuck Johnson in collaboration with AYCO levels intern Colleen McIntee.

Discipline: PARTNER ACROBATICS (no hand to hand)

Beginner:

Note: We understand that some beginners will be completely new to partner acrobatics hence unable to demonstrate the below pre-requisites. If this is the case, please only practice pre-requisites that you have learned from a trusted teacher.

- Hold a face-to-face counterbalance, standing, toe to toe, holding partners wrists, leaning out and let go of one hand, 5 seconds
- Hold a 'bunk bed' where partners hold one another by the ankles, bodies straight, one above the other, straight arms
- Tripod, 5 seconds
- Headstand, straight body, 5 seconds
- Kick up to handstand, beyond L shape (90 degrees)

Intermediate:

- Hold a thigh stand as base and flier with similar weighted partner
- Base or fly a knee shoulder stand (base lies on back, knees bent; flier's hands on base's knees, shoulders rest in base's hands, legs extended up)
- 10 push-ups, consecutively
- Hold handstand against wall, 15 seconds (flyer only)

Advanced:

- Two intermediate tricks (thigh stand base or fly, and knee shoulder stand as either base or flyer)
- Fly or base a standing two-high
- Hold an L-sit off the ground for 5 seconds (hands on floor, legs extended, body perpendicular to legs) OR tuck hold on canes for 5 seconds
- 15 push-ups, consecutively
- Hold free standing handstand, 10 seconds (flyer only)
- Hold handstand against wall, 10 seconds (base only)
- Hold free standing handstand, 10 seconds

*Tumbling contributed by Chuck Johnson in collaboration with AYCO levels intern Colleen McIntee

Discipline: AERIALS, vertical climbing apparatus

Apparatus within this discipline: Fabric, Rope, Spanish Web

Beginner:

Note: We understand that some beginners will be completely new to aerials hence unable to demonstrate the below pre-requisites. If this is the case, please only practice pre-requisites that you have learned from a trusted teacher.

- 1 pull up OR 20 second tuck hold
- Basic Climb, two times (no assistance)
- Invert from ground, hold 10 seconds
- Foot lock from air (no assistance, but no form or grace)

Intermediate:

- 3 pull ups with good form
- 5 consecutive tuck tips
- Basic Climb, dominant and non dominate foot, 10 ft
- 3 consecutive straddle inversions from ground
- Two positions in single foot lock OR crossed back straddle from double foot lock: splits, split roll up, crossed back straddle, single foot roll up, arabesque
- Double foot lock in the air
- From three climbs, get into same side knee wrap OR cross back wrap

- Single star drop
- 1 clean inversion in air

Advanced:

- 5 pull ups with good form
- 3 consecutive clean/ controlled skin the cats
- Demonstrate one of the following inverted climbs: same side bascule, opposite side bascule, spiderman
- Demonstrate one of the following upright climbs: bicycle, step (Russina/ French).
- 5 consecutive inversions from air
- Put on S-wrap (Ramone wrap) from air, without assistance
- Put on aerial dance wrap (double foot knot)
- Get into a hip key
- Demonstrate one slack drop and one rotational drop

Discipline: AERIALS, bar apparatus

Apparatus within this discipline: Trapeze. Lyra (hoop), Sling

Beginner:

Note: We understand that some beginners will be completely new to aerials hence unable to demonstrate the below pre-requisites. If this is the case, please only practice pre-requisites that you have learned from a trusted teacher.

- 1 pull up OR 20 second tuck hold
- Knee hang for 10 seconds
- To standing (go from under bar to standing on it safely (no assistance))
- Front balance
- Bird's Nest
- Angel (one foot in ropes, one on bar (no assistance))

Intermediate:

- 3 pull ups with good form
- Knee beats and hand beats (clean, but not large)

- To standing and down again (clean progression)
- Single Knee Hang
- Pull Over (can be unclean)
- Half Mill Circle

Advanced:

- 5 pull ups with good form
- 3 ankle, knee, hand beats each (clean and large)
- Monkey Roll (one version)
- Front Hip Circles
- Full Mill Circle
- Fall to Ankles (one version from bird's nest' sitting, back straddle)

*Aerials contributed by Adam Woolley in collaboration with AYCO levels intern Colleen McIntee

