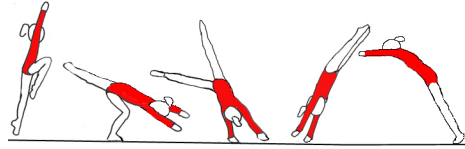


THE ROUND-OFF



Introduction

Although the Round-off is taught as a skill in itself, the ultimate aim is to use it as part of a longer tumble run.

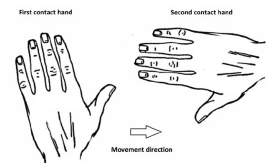
It should be noted that the ending feet position changes according to what skill, if any, follows immediately after:

1. Round-off on its own – feet land almost directly underneath the hips.
2. Round-off into a backflip – Feet need to land in front of the hips to aid the backwards ‘fall’ action.
3. Round-off into back somersault – Feet need to be behind the hips to facilitate the pivoting action needed into the jump upwards.

This document only explores the skill in its own right.

What you are looking for:

- ✓ Strong hurdle step in, with arms by the ears and a low entry (See above section).
- ✓ Whole body is front facing as long as possible, with the $\frac{1}{4}$ turn as late as possible.
- ✓ Deep leg lunge with chest low and hands stretched out.
- ✓ A powerful swing of the back leg with a good wide split, keeping the bodyline straight.
- ✓ A late turn of the shoulders ready for hand placement.
- ✓ Correct placement of the hands, with the second hand facing directly backwards. Head stays tucked between the arms throughout.
- ✓ Fast snapping together of the legs after the vertical.
- ✓ Strong shoulder pushing action and simultaneous dishing in of the upper body.
- ✓ Held Arc position to stand, *not* a pike down.



Prerequisites

- A good, straight Front to Back Cartwheel with correct hand placement.
- A strong, straight kick to Handstand.
- Good body tension.
- An understanding of the shoulder push action.

Key Teaching Points:

First be aware of the most common problems:

- Hands placed too early and too close to the feet instead of reaching forward, and keeping a straight line through the body.
- Not keeping in a straight line. This can be for a number of reasons, but commonly is due to incorrect front foot position. If the foot is not straight, the subsequent turning action will not be straight.
- Incorrect hand placement. The second hand is the directional hand, and *must* be placed facing directly backwards.
- Chest and head are stuck out on entry and first phase. Both need to be tucked in throughout.
- A weak needle kick. That is the ‘kick-up’ action of the driving leg. This can be caused by a poor leg split, a weak Handstand, or simply a lack of power. A weak needle kick means the gymnast stays upside down for longer, which means more likelihood of going off balance, loss of momentum, and a laboured lifting of the chest.

Progressions & Set-ups

The general sequence of progressions for the skill as a whole might be:

- Over a Box Top, bringing feet together on landing.
- Off a platform to land on mat.
- On the floor with hands placed on a springboard for help with the push.

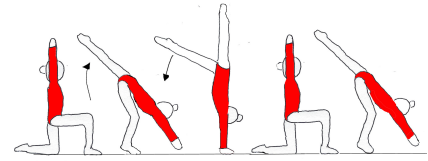
The main areas that will need exploring are:

- The ‘leg drive’ action.
- The long reach & dished exit ie. Body shaping.
- The shoulder push
- Keeping the skill in a straight line

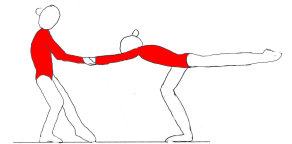
The Leg Drive Action (Needle kick)

The dynamic lunge of the front leg, and explosive swing of the back leg can be worked as follows:

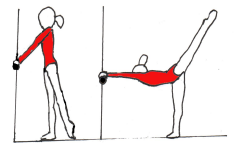
- Conditioning such as squat jumps and mountain-climbers.
- Kicking toward (but not into) handstand from a deeply lunged front leg, or from kneeling, done in conditioning sets. Ensure the shoulder angle remains open throughout, and with the head tucked in.



- Partnered lunge hops across the floor. Partner holds hands and guides the gymnast in a forward lunge hopping action, chest up for an easier version, or parallel to the floor for a more advanced version.



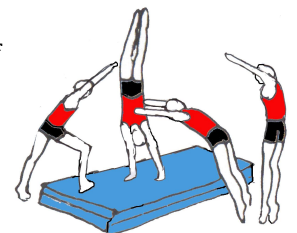
- Holding wall bars at hip height, the gymnast practises swinging the leg strongly upwards, while pushing the chest down. Hips must be facing directly to the bars at all times, and not twist as the leg is lifted.



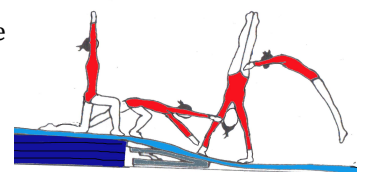
- Have the gymnast kick strongly into a Cartwheel over a low platform such as a box top. Because they are approaching the kick from a lower level, they must kick really hard to get over. Once this is going well, the gymnast can attempt to Round-off over using the correct hand placement. This is extremely hard, but the effect will be seen when the Round-off is taken to the floor.

Long Reach & Dishing Action.

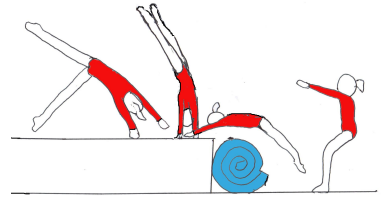
- To encourage a long reach, have the gymnast stand with one foot up on a box top. The gymnast pushes strongly on the lifted leg and round-offs over the box, with hands on the top, to land on the other side. Feet must land as far away as possible, to avoid a piking action.
- Repeat the exercise using a firm crash mat or stacked floor mats. Have the gymnast Round-off over the mat widthways, and then for a greater challenge, lengthways. They will have no option but to reach their arms as far forward as possible.



- The head position is fundamental to all tumbling and incorrect position can cause problems, so it is worth paying attention at this early stage. A fun exercise, which can be done with all the drills shown, is to have the gymnast place a piece of foam (this could be just be a car or bath sponge) under the chin, and try to perform the drill or full skill keeping it in place. Although the chin might be a little bit lower than in reality, it is a great tool for learning to set the head correctly between the arms, and can help enforce the Dish shape required on exit.
- Create a slightly raised platform (eg mat stack) with a springboard butted up to it. Have the gymnast kneel down facing down the slope. The gymnast executes a cartwheel $\frac{1}{4}$ turn or Round-off down the slope. The aim is to not lift the back knee fully off the mat until the hands have been placed, thus encouraging the gymnast to lunge low and reach forward to the fullest extent.



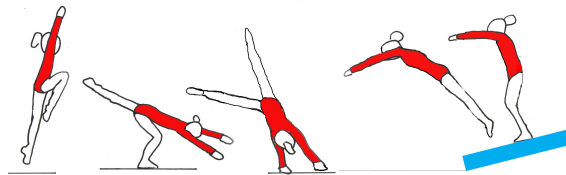
- To explore the dishing in of the body on exit, create an arched shape set up using a rolled up mat, handspring trainer turned upside down, or any appropriate soft play shapes. Begin up on a platform, getting the gymnast to Round-off over the roll shape onto a soft mat. When they are comfortable with the action, have the gymnast bring their feet down in front of their hips, and fall back onto their bottom. The round-off dishing action can also be done on the floor over a smaller rolled up mat or soft play cylinder.



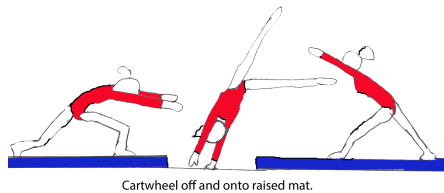
The Shoulder Push (Block)

(See also drills and conditioning in the Handspring section)

- To emphasis the powerful push off and lift needed on exit, have the gymnast perform the Round-off to land up a slope. This could be a springboard (easier) or a sloping firm landing mat (harder). Encourage the gymnast to lift the chest up quickly so they can stand up.



- One fun way of exploring the shoulder push action, is to have the gymnast cartwheel off a low mat, placing their hands on the floor, but pushing up to land on another low mat. The gymnast will get the idea of the effort and momentum needed to get back up onto the raised surface, relying purely on the push through the shoulders and hands.



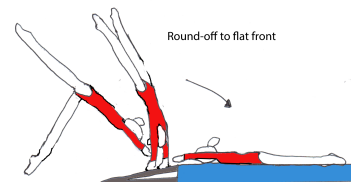
Cartwheel off and onto raised mat.

Keeping a Straight Line

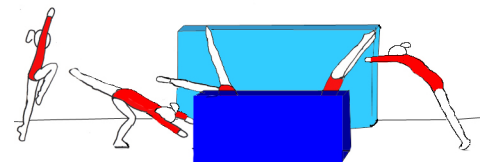
- Set up a springboard next to a soft crash mat. Have the gymnast do a Cartwheel $\frac{1}{4}$ turn in with correct hand placement, to land flat front. Any incorrect placement of the hands, collapsing of the shoulders or core, will become immediately apparent, as the gymnast will be unable to land completely flat on their stomach and in a straight line towards the board.

- Look for the arms coming across the chest or face, instead of staying up by the ears, as this shows the gymnast is compensating for incorrect body alignment. It usually results in them landing in a hollow shape with head up.

- If the gymnast is landing on their side, this shows that they are not getting their body right round in time, usually because of incorrect hand placement.



- An easy and fun way of ensuring the round-off is straight, is to have the gymnast execute it down a 'corridor' made out of crash mats, coaching blocks or similar. It doesn't have to be particularly high. Have the corridor quite wide to start with, then gradually make it more narrow.



A note on foot placement: If you find a gymnast is consistently going off their line in a Round-off, take a look at the front foot as they go into the lunge. It could be that it is not straight on, but twisted slightly outwards (and also the knee). This is a tricky habit to break, as it can be part of small misalignment of knees and hips etc. However it is worth trying to correct, and the best way is to have the gymnast consistently do sets of round-offs with their foot placed in an exaggerated opposite direction! It looks weird it feels weird, but it does work, and eventually the gymnast's foot will be straight without having to think about it.

Common Faults and Problems

There are many different problems which can occur with recreational gymnasts when it comes to the Round-off. Bear in mind that all flight skills rely on power, strength, flexibility and coordination. For any gymnast training just one hour a week, this is a huge ask, and Coaches need to take this into account. Here are a few commonly seen:

- A Cartwheel action just bringing the legs together and down, with little or no power. This is usually at the beginning of the learning process and is just a lack of understanding of what is required. Breaking down and practising the constituent parts will help greatly.
- A shifting of the hands on contact from one position to another. This is usually caused by a lack of flexibility in the shoulders, the legs, or both. It is not easily remedied, but if the gymnast can build up a really strong shoulder push, it might be possible to counteract it.
- A piked exit. Extremely common and due to lack of shoulder, arm and core strength. This can really only be cured with regular conditioning.
- A short step in resulting in the gymnast bending forward to place the hands, instead of reaching forward beyond the knee. The Hurdle Step should be revisited.
- A disconnect in timing between the placing of the hands and the kicking of the back leg. Quite a hard one to spot, but look for a slight delay between the hands going down and the leg starting to rise. Both must happen instantaneously or crucial body shaping and power will be lost.

A Final Note

Children love to Round-off (or their version of it). Doing a skill which requires a run-up can make them feel that they are now doing 'what the big gymnasts do'! And parents love to see it too. So when it isn't being done correctly, and maybe never will, try not to get frustrated, or do endless drills, or stop children attempting it, because this is what recreational gymnastics is all about; fun, challenge and a sense of achievement