

VAULT

SQUAT & STRADDLE THROUGH

These vaults go hand in hand and incidentally always carry the same tariff in competition. Most gymnasts find one easier than the other. Although it's good to practise both, there is no real need to drill both vaults endlessly until both are mastered.

Gymnasts with poor hip flexibility will almost certainly favour the Squat Through, and struggle with the Straddle. Gymnasts with a wide side split, or are carrying weight around the tummy area, will usually favour the Straddle, as it is slightly easier to perform.

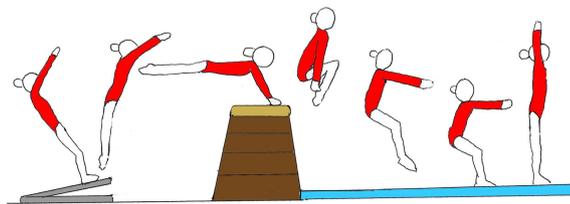
When working these two vaults, it is a good idea to always mix them up within the same session so that the gymnast can choose which they prefer to do.

The preparations for both Vaults are the same, only the flight off changes.

What makes a good Vault?

- ✓ A strong, fast run-up.
- ✓ Correct body and foot placement on the Springboard (Feet in front of hips).
- ✓ Arms swinging from the back.
- ✓ Open forward reach with forward momentum.
- ✓ Good flight on with correct body shaping and point of contact.
- ✓ Strong push (block) off the top initiated by the hands and shoulders.
- ✓ Good height and distance from the vault in second flight.
- ✓ Solid landing (not too deep).

SQUAT THROUGH



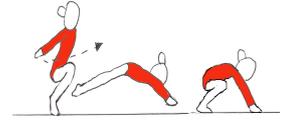
The Squat through is a logical follow on from the Squat on and is relatively simple for most gymnasts to achieve.

You are looking for:

- ✓ A 'layout' of the body into an almost horizontal position in first flight.
- ✓ Hands are placed shoulder width apart on the vault.
- ✓ The knees are brought up between the hands.
- ✓ The gymnast should be looking straight ahead at point of contact.
- ✓ A strong push off from the hands and shoulders and a lifting of the chest.
- ✓ Knees remain bent up to the chest until the gymnast is completely clear of the Vault, before extending ready for landing.
- ✓ Feet land slightly in front of the Hips to absorb remaining momentum.
- ✓ Landing is with gently bent knees, chest up but slightly forward over the knees, and arms straight out in front.
- ✓ Any gap between the feet is eliminated as the gymnast stretches up to finish.

Start with the progressions for Squat on, concentrating on the lifting of the hips above the height of the vault, and looking straight ahead as the hands make contact.

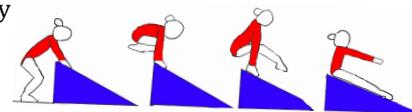
- Recap the Cat spring, with an arm swing. The children start in a standing squat with their arms back. They sharply swing their arms forward, extend their legs, and ‘pounce’ forward like a cat onto hands, then feet. They can do this to Squat again, or to a Straddle Stand.



- From Front Support, have the gymnast jump the feet through the middle to land in Long Sit. This is a good way of showing that it is possible to get the legs in front, and also to demonstrate how then need to push through the hands and shoulders to release the feet.



- A nice little set-up for starting the Squat Through process is to use a small soft play wedge if available, or even make a low slope using a springboard under a landing mat. From the floor, the gymnast places the hands on the top of the slope and attempts to squat the legs through to end sitting on the slope in Pike sit. As a reward for getting the legs through, they can then slide to the bottom!



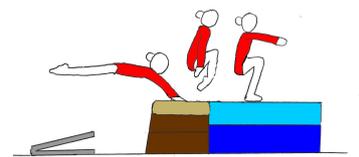
- Use just a Box top or similar stackable apparatus without a springboard. Have the children try to jump their feet up and over keeping their hands on the top. Remember to keep emphasising the need to look straight ahead. Note that this is a pendulum action which finishes with the hands still on the Box Top for most, but this is a confidence building exercise only, so technical perfection is not expected.



- Next add one more Box section, plus a Springboard and landing mat. This can sometimes make children nervous because it looks more like a proper vault, but reassure them that the height is exactly the same, starting from the higher Springboard, and landing on a thick landing mat. Repeat the Squat over exercise from standing, then add a few run-up steps.



- From here you can start to raise the height. If you have children who are still struggling, try a set up where the landing area is the same height as the Vault. Ask the children to Squat Through to land the feet on the landing mat. If they can do this without touching their feet on the Box Top, then this will show them that they can get all the way over. From there, start to reduce the landing height and increase the Vault height.



Common Faults

- When the gymnast first manages to get over the Vault without the feet touching, it is usually done with the incorrect technique of ‘swinging’ the feet without pushing off, so the hands are left on the top even as the feet land. This is usually accompanied by a lift of the chest too soon, so that the gymnast’s upper body is still over the Vault on exit. It looks like this...
- Reiterating the need to quickly push off the hands immediately on contact is not always enough. Showing how it should look correctly is sometimes all that is needed. However another good drill is for the Coach to hold out something soft on the landing side of the Vault, such as a piece of foam, a soft ball, or even a cuddly toy. Ask the gymnast to reach forward and try and touch / grab the object with both hands before their feet touch the mat.



NB. The approach and jump onto the springboard is the most vital part of the Vault. An increase in power and speed can usually rectify most difficulties with the Squat and Straddle Through.