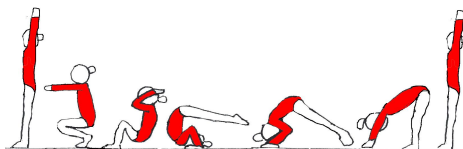


## BACKWARD ROLL



A difficult Roll for young ones to master, due to the required Tricep arm push needed to do it correctly. However, the roll can still be executed in a neat way at any age with the correct body shaping.

Very young children should not be left to roll over their neck unsupported. This is dangerous to the still-soft bones and tendons. Instead, they must be lifted at the hips as they reach the top of their back.

**NB** Be aware of a child with Down's Syndrome. Due to a condition called 'Atlanto Axial Instability', rolling on the neck may put too much pressure on the spinal cord. If you are in any doubt, check with the parent/ carer, and get written consent if needed.

### You are aiming for:

- ✓ A squatting tuck (or piked entry from standing with straight legs).
- ✓ A tucked shape on the roll over.
- ✓ Elbows tucked in.
- ✓ A strong push with the arms when the bottom and hips are directly over the head.
- ✓ Directing the legs backwards and down towards the floor (not upwards.)
- ✓ A clean exit to stand, with feet close to the hands.

### Teaching Technique:

- Although teaching a piked entry from the beginning may seem a bit advanced, there can be a definite advantage to both child and coach, in that beginner's backward rolls often lack the speed required to take the body over. A fall or 'beat back' into the roll automatically increases momentum, as long as the child has the ability to immediately tuck into the correct rolling position.
- Remember that the key to rolling right over onto the feet, *is to not allow the legs to open or straighten too early*. This is a common problem when first learning, and results in the feet being directed upwards, instead of backwards and down to the floor. The child must stay in a tucked ball shape until the hips are right over their head, before extending the legs.

### Set-ups & Progressions:

- To understand the hand position, get the gymnast to sit in tuck, with arms straight out, resting on the kneecaps, palms facing up. Then bend the arms so that the palms are face-up resting on the shoulders. It sometimes helps to say they are carrying two trays or pizzas.
- As with forward rolls, start on a downhill slope e.g. Soft wedge, or a springboard with a mat over.
- On a slope, first get the child to sit down at the top, and hold the Tuck shape while the coach helps them to roll over by lifting the hips. First attempts usually land on knees, not feet.
- Repeat the process of sitting in Tuck, but with arms out in front, bending them in in time for the roll
- Finally start from a standing position, before sitting down and rolling.



- A good way of getting the gymnast used to aiming the feet in a downward direction, is to have them roll off a slightly raised platform. For beginners, this can be a slope on top of a thick landing mat.



- For the more able, stacked mats of gradually lower height. The roll is performed on the platform, and the feet are dropped down to land on the floor.
- Rolling to a Straddle Stand is a good place to start, as it is the easiest of the exits. Once this has been mastered, the gymnast can learn to stand up with feet and knees together. As the child rolls over, it is important that the feet are placed in as close to the hands as possible, with knees together to aid standing up. If the feet are placed too far away, the gymnast will inevitably have to walk the hands backwards in a struggle to get upright.

### Adding a Piked Entry

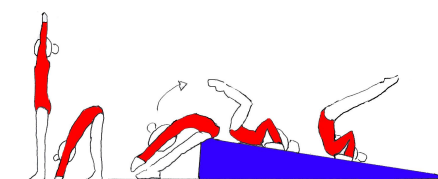
Although teaching a piked entry from the beginning may seem a bit advanced, there can be a definite advantage to both child and coach, in that beginner's backward rolls often lack the speed required to take the body over. A fall or 'beat back' into the roll automatically increases momentum, as long as the child has the ability to quickly change arm positions and immediately tuck into the correct rolling position.

### Set-ups & Progressions:

- Starting from a seated position at the top of a slope, have the gymnast extend the legs out straight in front, and the arms straight up. From there, get the gymnast to lean or 'beat' sharply forward and back into the roll, taking the body into a tuck shape as the hips are directly over the head.



- Once the child is comfortable with this, and is tucking the hands and knees in correctly, the process can be repeated from standing. From a standing stretch, the gymnast leans into a deep pike fold, then falls to sit at the top of the slope, keeping the legs straight. The rotation is the same as from seated.



- At this stage, and for the first attempts on the floor, the hands can be placed next to the bottom during the 'fall back', to lessen the impact, but of course must be quickly brought back up and into place ready for the 'push'. Later as the gymnast becomes more proficient, the hands will only touch the floor once, at the point of the 'push'.



### Supporting

Very young children must always be supported to avoid unnecessary strain on their necks. They will be unable to push through their arms at this stage, if indeed they can keep their hands on the floor, so the Coach should be there to lift the hips to make room for the head to lift.



**A note on overweight children:** As with the Forward Roll, the Backward Roll can be a struggle for children with large tummies, as they cannot tuck the knees in close enough to create the necessary rounding of the back. In this instance, an alternative could be to allow them to roll over one shoulder to kneel, or to finish in a more suitable open shape such as Front Support.