

UNIT 3

INTRODUCTION TO ARMS ONLY MOVEMENTS

The intermediate level is the point at which we start to introduce arms only movements to students. Eventually, these are movements where students will be supporting their body weight in an inverted position just through their arms in a variety of different grips. At an intermediate stage, we start to introduce these grips, giving students the technique they will need to feel secure in each grip and encouraging them to practise a range of intermediate suitable moves where additional weight is placed into the arm position yet the legs are still to some extent in contact with the pole.

Arms only movement on the pole creates a number of issues including:

1. Students must understand the 'push-pull' relationship in the arms that creates the grip – the bottom arm should always be locked and pushing with the top arm pulling to control and stabilise the position. Many students rely heavily on the bottom arm without understanding the pull on the top arm. This can put excessive pressure on the joints of the bottom arm, creating wrist, elbow and shoulder issues.
2. Students require a greater degree of strength – especially in the shoulders, core and lats to control the move. This is why arms only moves are not taught until an Advanced Level when students will have developed this muscular control from working through the Intermediate Inverts progressively.
3. Spotting is paramount in all arms only positions. This is where the Intermediate syllabus also helps. It allows students to practise strong spotting technique and understand the key rules of spotting in moves that have a greater number of anchor points on the pole and are less likely to ever need a rescue spot.
4. Ensuring students are aware of all dismount options is important when teaching arms only moves as students may need to dismount differently than normal and this will aid students' capacity to self-rescue from more advanced arms only positions later on.
5. It is vital to always have mats available when teaching arms only – as the risk of injury increases significantly in these positions from an unplanned fall.
6. Students must be educated to make them aware of the difficulty of arms only moves and this increased risk of injury so that they take this area of their training seriously and always attempt these moves with full focus when they are physically ready and prepared.
7. It's important to introduce arms only moves progressively and not to move students on too quickly. Arms only positions require a very specific type of strength that is hard to develop without actually performing the moves. The moves should be steadily developed over a series of months, firstly to ensure students are safe in each position before moving on but secondly to allow for correct muscular development and to avoid injury.
8. Ensure students are training a range of arms only positions – on both sides to keep muscular balance.
9. Ensure students are not abandoning their other training in favour of arms only moves, if these moves are too heavily trained it can lead to injury and imbalance in the body.
10. Think about when would be the best time to introduce arms only movement to a class. It's beneficial to do these moves early on in a class when students are mentally and physically prepared. When students are tired, this tends to be when technique becomes lax, students are less proprioceptive and when injuries occur. When you feel students are losing focus – move your class onto moves that they are more familiar with that are less taxing.

PREP-POSITIONS

At the introductory level of arms only work, students will simply be taught the technique for each grip – without initiating a full release from the pole. Instead, we encourage students to practise the different grip using three ‘prep’ positions which all provide partial contact with the pole. The prep positions are:

1. **Flower Position**
2. **Inverted D**
3. **Extended Butterfly**

On the following pages, you can find detailed descriptions of all the recommended prep positions, along with pictures of the positions and guidance on spotting technique.

PREP-POSITION	DESCRIPTION
<p data-bbox="181 913 416 943">FLOWER POSITION</p> 	<p data-bbox="619 913 1422 1458">The Flower position provides the most comprehensive prep-position. It is a development from the Caterpillar drive learnt previously in this course allowing students to transfer body weight from the leg grip into the arm grip in a safe and effective way – through the progressive relaxation and opening of the knee grip. Not only is it a balance shape due to the square shoulder and hip position, it provides a natural emergency dismount back into a Crucifix on the pole. It is a stable base from which to practise the ‘push-pull’ arm relationship and build students confidence and strength. The consistent ankle grip in this pose also helps students feel reassured as to the position of the pole throughout. As students become more confident in the shape the legs can slide lower down the pole, retaining the shape.</p> <p data-bbox="619 1514 1401 1543">In the final position, key indicators you should be looking for are;</p> <ul data-bbox="671 1554 1430 1928" style="list-style-type: none">✓ The hips should be square to the pole, slightly further away from the pole than the shoulders.✓ Shoulders should be square to the pole.✓ Student’s eye line should be towards the ceiling.✓ The angle between the arm and the pole should be approx. 30 degrees (slightly larger for elbow/forearm grips).✓ There should be a clear push through the bottom shoulder.✓ The core should be engaged with a flat or slightly hollow back position with a slightly tucked pelvis.

	<p>✓ The wrists should be straight with the ear sitting by the bottom arm bicep.</p> <p>To spot the position, place yourself behind the student with hands at the hips. It can be more comfortable to place a hand on the lower back and wrap the other arm around the student's waist to get a better base of support.</p>
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<p>INVERTED D</p> 	<p>The Inverted D can provide students with a more challenging variation than the Flower Position. Although still a 'square' to the pole position, the hips are further extended therefore making lateral balance a challenge. Again, students should progressively transfer the body weight from the leg to arm grip. It begins with a Caterpillar base action again to allow the arms to be placed on the pole in the chosen grip. From here, students should maintain the knee grip but uncross the ankles placing them either side of the pole. The knees are then relaxed with the pole held between the ankles allowing the hips to move away from the pole and the legs to straighten. As students become more confident, they can start to extend the shape by bringing the ankles lower dropping the hips away from the pole. Not only is balance more challenging in this shape, the dismount requires more skill to return to the Crucifix leg grip on the pole. An alternative version of Inverted D can be performed by first going into an Extended Butterfly then replacing the back leg onto the pole so that the pole is between the ankles.</p> <p>When assessing an Inverted D position, you should be looking for the same 'key indicators' as the Flower Position. Spotting is also largely similar for this shape again as it remains square to the pole and entry/exit points are identical.</p> <p>To spot this position take one arm around the waist of the student and place one arm on the small of the lower back. The students back leg should then feed over your shoulder. This is a great position to provide a guidance spot from into and out of the move, be it onto the pole or onto the floor.</p>
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EXTENDED BUTTEFLY



An Extended Butterfly can also provide a great prep-position for arms only work although in this context, the Extended Butterfly we are looking for is the 'stronger' shape rather than the more aesthetically pleasing shape! This variation can be challenging, as it requires an active engagement of the torso to ensure that the core, hips and shoulders stay square to the pole – even though the point of contact is only on one leg and is therefore by nature unbalanced. Students will often be tempted to rotate outwards and shift the grip to the arch of the foot which requires less muscular control to hold. From an instructional point of view, this is however easy to spot and can easily be remedied.

In the final position, key indicators you should be looking for are:

- ✓ The hips should be square to the pole, slightly further away from the pole than the shoulders.
- ✓ Shoulders should be square to the pole.
- ✓ Student's eye line should be towards the ceiling.
- ✓ The angle between the arm and the pole should be approx. 30 degrees (slightly larger for elbow/forearm grips).
- ✓ There should be a clear push through the bottom shoulder.
- ✓ The core should be engaged with a flat or slightly hollow back position with a slightly tucked pelvis.
- ✓ The wrists should be straight with the ear sitting by the bottom arm bicep.

To spot this position take one arm around the waist of the student and place one arm on the small of the lower back. The students back leg should then feed over your shoulder. This is a great position to provide a guidance spot from into and out of the move, be it onto the pole or onto the floor.

Another option for achieving an Extended Butterfly for the purpose of arms only prep would be to get students to perform a strong Flower Position then release the back leg taking it behind the body. Before the leg stretches so far back that the student has to arch to keep extending, they should begin straightening the hooked leg. This ensures that the back can remain flat. Performing a Flower prep first also ensures that the student's weight is already away from the pole, making it easier to extend.