
THE IMPORTANCE OF TWISTING DIRECTION IN TRAMPOLINE GYMNASTICS

BACKGROUND

Twisting skills are an essential component of Trampoline Gymnastics all the way from Level 1 through to Level 10. It is important to establish an athletes twisting direction early on in their career to minimise disruptions to training at higher levels.

There is a simple reason for this. As athletes progress and learn harder skills they need to be confident in their twisting direction, this allows them to learn new skills quicker and master combination skills seamlessly. If an athlete twists in different directions in different skills, this makes life difficult for both athlete and coach, and can become a safety risk due to hesitation or confusion.

If there is any doubt as to an athletes twisting direction it needs to be resolved immediately. Don't leave it to another coach or say you'll get to it next week, it's much easier for all parties if this is caught and fixed early. Yes, an athlete may be frustrated that they need to go back and relearn old skills but the longer you wait, the more entrenched the incorrect twisting direction will become, the harder it will be for the athlete to retrain their brain and the more skills they will need to relearn.

It is a coaches job to give every athlete in their care the best possible opportunity to succeed. While an athlete may not go on to be a world champion trampolinist, they may decide to go onto a discipline such as diving, aerial skiing, stunt performing, cheerleading or circus arts and they need will need to have the best possible foundation of skills. Alternatively, they may go onto coaching and will need to understand the importance of twisting direction. In summary, coaches must be on the look out for twisting errors in every single athlete in their care, regardless of experience or ability.



IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

How do you tell if an athlete is twisting in different directions?

The most obvious way to know if there is an issue is when the athlete indicates something is wrong. This may mean the athlete expresses confusion and says they twist in different directions, or they may be having difficulty learning a new combination skill such as Swivel Hips or Cradle and can be seen twisting back on themselves. Another good indicator is if the athlete's twisting in a well practiced skill looks awkward or consistently occurs too early or too late.

It can be hard to know what to look for if you're not used to paying attention to twisting direction. The easiest way to tell which direction an athlete twists is to have the athlete perform a twisting skill whilst standing in front of you facing the side and look at whether you see the athlete's chest or back first.

If the athlete starts facing towards your LEFT and you see their CHEST first, they are twisting LEFT. If the athlete starts facing towards your LEFT and you see their BACK first, they are twisting RIGHT.

The opposite is true if the athlete starts facing towards your right. If the athlete starts facing towards your RIGHT and you see their CHEST first, they are twisting RIGHT. If the athlete starts facing towards your RIGHT and you see their BACK first, they are twisting LEFT.

If you are working with an athlete from Level 4 or above for the first time, always check their twisting direction in their Barani. This is one of the most common skills that athletes have issue with and it is crucial that any issues are caught before the athlete progresses to harder twisting elements.

IDENTIFYING THE SOLUTION

How do you know which direction is an athletes natural twisting direction?

If your athlete is twisting in different directions in different skills, it can be hard to know which direction they should be twisting.

The most reliable way to tell what an athlete's natural twisting direction should be is by looking at how they perform a Cartwheel or Round Off and comparing it with the twisting skills they have already learnt.

In a Cartwheel or Round Off, whichever side the athlete starts on almost always indicates their natural twisting direction. This means that an athlete that places their RIGHT leg forward, and RIGHT hand down first in a Cartwheel or Round Off should twist to the RIGHT.



RIGHT foot forward, **RIGHT** hand first, athlete should twist **RIGHT**

Likewise, an athlete that places their LEFT leg forward, and LEFT hand down first in a Cartwheel or Round Off should twist to the LEFT.



If your athlete is having issues with twisting but has yet to learn a cartwheel, teach them. There are a small number of athletes who will be an exception to this rule, this is where it is important to compare this with their other twisting skills.

By comparing the athletes twisting direction across a diverse range of skills, you will be able to get a better idea of the athletes favoured twisting direction and the scale of the issue. You may find that just one skill is affected, or that the issue affects skills with a backward rotation or skills utilising a specific landing shape e.g. Seat Landings. In most cases, it is easier to re-teach twisting in forward rotation than it in backward rotation.

Please Note:

In almost all athletes, Cartwheels/Round Offs will actually twist the OPPOSITE direction to their natural twisting direction. This is because a Cartwheel in which an athlete places their RIGHT leg forward, and RIGHT hand down first is in fact a LEFT twisting skill. It is therefore very important that athletes do NOT learn their Barani's or forward twisting somersaults as an aerial round off but instead a front somersault with a late half turn.

ENACTING THE SOLUTION

What do you do if you suspect an athlete is twisting in different directions?

Establish Their Twisting Direction

Establish what direction the athlete is currently twisting, what direction they should be twisting and identify any skills that will need to be re-taught.

Record the Information

Write the athletes correct twisting direction on the athletes sheet in clear writing.

Reinforce the Change

Don't let the athlete forget or decide it's too hard to change. Help the athlete by taking them back through the skill progressions and giving them visual cues or physical reminders such as a stamp or hairband on the wrist they need to be twisting toward.

