

Lesson 6

The Popular Reel and Alternating Timing

A reel is the name of a class of club swinging patterns in alternating time. The most popular reel combines outward, full-arm and shoulder circles swung off-synch. This move feels great to perform as it relaxes and opens up the shoulders. Once learnt, the rhythm will seem natural and the pattern can be done impressively fast!

First with your weaker hand only, swing outward combinations of full-arm and shoulder circles. The stronger side then finds the alternating time by starting the outward swing as the other club begins to rise from the lowest point of its full-arm circle. Figure 6.1.

Your elbows should bend into the shoulder circle, but be locked straight for the full-arm circle so that they form a big, outwards stretch. Bouncing a little with your knees can sometimes help to establish the rhythm. Once you have the beginnings of the move, check the symmetry of your pattern in a mirror.

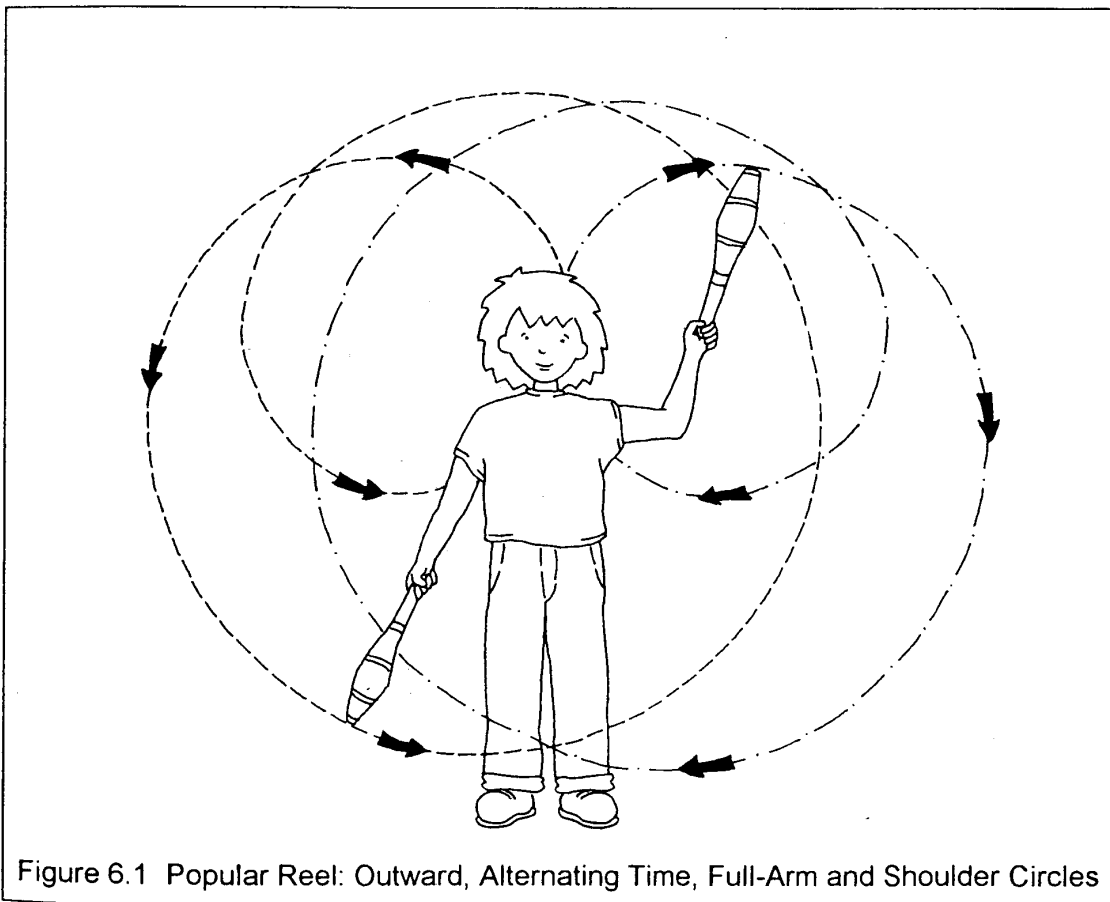


Figure 6.1 Popular Reel: Outward, Alternating Time, Full-Arm and Shoulder Circles

To learn any alternating time move, start with your weaker side and only bring in the stronger side to find the true rhythm. If you are right handed, exercise the left side most because this will improve your ambidexterity, finally leading to perfect swinging form.

Forward and backward hand circles in opposition time (Lesson 3, page 17) can be linked in combination with a popular reel making an interesting sequence that involves twisting your body to perform the opposition side spins.

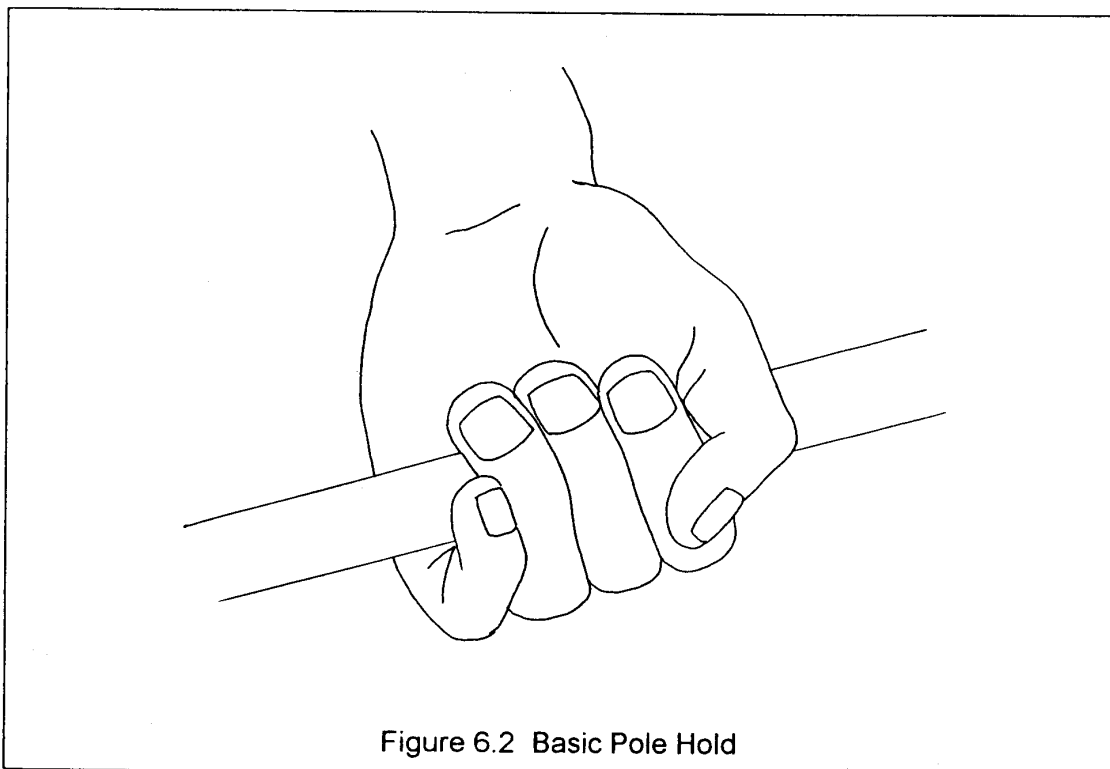
Of course, the popular reel can be done in the opposite direction - i.e., inward.

**Weak hand alone, inward combination full-arm and shoulder circles.
Other side joins pattern in alternating time.**

It may help to turn your hips slightly as you try the inwards reel. The wrist action needed for an inward shoulder circle is similar to that used for a fast serve in the game of tennis.

Reels with a Long Pole

The popular reel is an extremely effective move with a pole. Use an ordinary broomstick as these are strong, cheap and available from any hardware shop. First pick up a pole and hold its centre loosely in the notch between your thumb and first finger, Figure 6.2.



The reel does not involve manipulating the pole between the fingers. Rather, a flexible wrist alone does all the work to direct the course of the pole.

Make several outward full-arm swings before bending the elbow and trying a shoulder circle behind the same side that holds the pole. Figure 6.3 opposite.

From a slow start, build up momentum and stretch out the shoulders with the full-arm circle. A loose ring grip on the centre of the pole will allow the shoulder circle to flow. Keep concentrating on what you are doing in order to avoid hitting yourself.

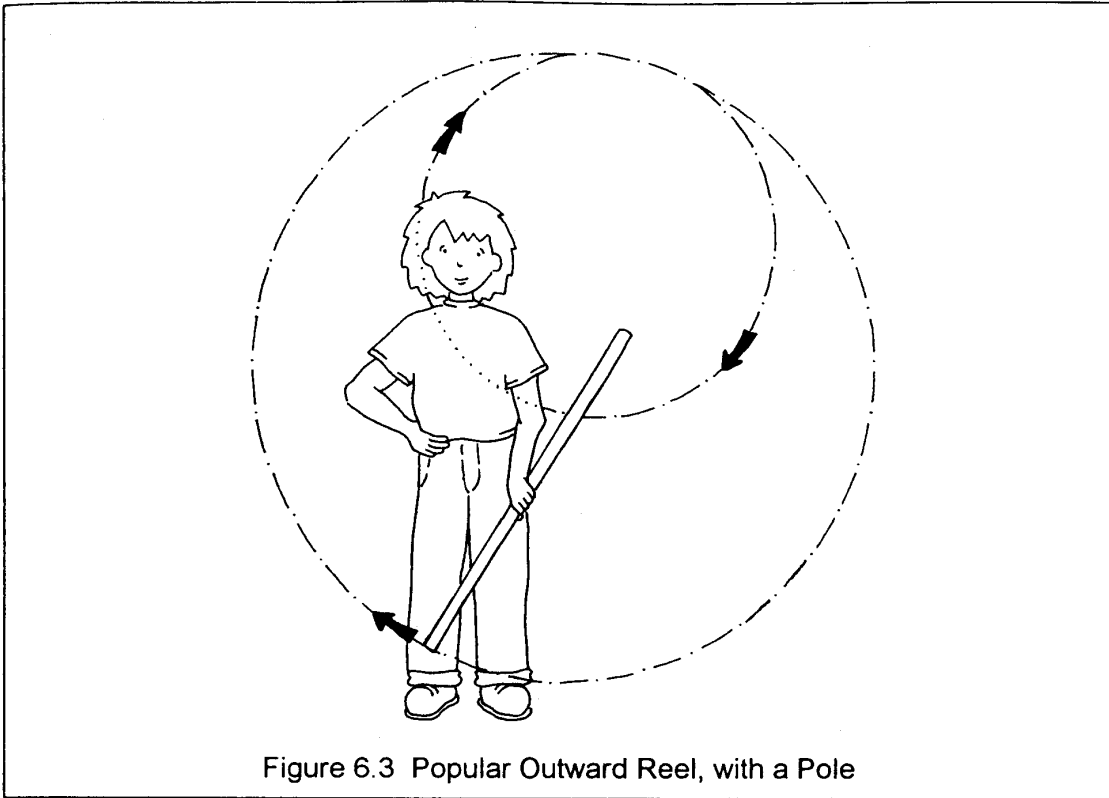


Figure 6.3 Popular Outward Reel, with a Pole

The reel has a mesmerizing effect, particularly with fire equipment. It is possible to twirl the pole between the fingers in the shoulder circle, although the move arguably looks better done fast and with the wrist alone. Try the inward direction of full-arm and shoulder circles next.

Inward reel with a pole.

The inward direction is traditionally used in Peking Opera-style spear manipulation and the secret is to let your wrist flex into the shoulder circle, rather than trying to turn your elbow.

There are many club swinging moves that can be tailored for use with other props. Certain pole moves are illustrated in this guide and many of these movements will work with either one or two poles. However, rings and flags can also be made to spin in very attractive swinging arcs. Those readers interested in practical circus skills will be able adapt the flowing movements developed by club swinging for use with a whole range of equipment from ribbons, rings, flags, balls and devil sticks, even hats and umbrellas!

Explore the integration of swinging into other performance arts, particularly dance, to gain the full benefit of your improved coordination and fitness.

This chapter is taken from

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www.cosmosjugglers.co.uk - see the *Holidays* pages for Anna's annual May and August UK events for club swingers, poi & pole spinners, jugglers, fire enthusiasts and glow-in-the dark/UV performers.