

The Aerial Sling Manual

Volume 2

~PREVIEW~

A step-by-step reference guide for teachers
and students of any aerial hammock program

Rebekah Leach



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT VIDEO ACCESS

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DISCLAIMER

This manual is not intended for laypersons to pick up and start learning on their own. All use (and misuse) of this manual is done so AT YOUR OWN RISK.

Check with your healthcare professional before beginning any exercise program, especially one involving inverting and going into positions that cause pressure to certain places on the body. For example, those with heart conditions should not invert, as it is a dangerous situation that can cause stroke, heart attack, dizzy spells, or further injury, including death. As with any exercise program, there is always a risk of injury. Also, working at any given height adds an increased risk of injury, including paralysis or death.

BE SAFE

The top 10 safety precautions to heed:

1. Start by taking live lessons from a professional aerialist. Use this book for reference only.
2. Have rigging installed and/or inspected by a rigging professional. Each time before you practice, visually check your rigging/equipment. Perform thorough periodic inspections.
3. Always practice over a mat appropriate to the height level you are working at.
4. Never practice alone. Always have a spotter.
5. Always perform a solid warm-up prior to mounting an aerial apparatus.
6. Practice safe progression. (If you do not have the required strength, do not attempt the move.)
7. Don't make guesses. If you are not sure if something is going to "work," don't try it!
8. Focus on injury prevention exercises & proper shoulder placement early in your training.
9. Always practice new moves low to the ground.
10. Listen to your body. Take care of it, and it will take care of you.

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Rebekah Leach.

This book may be purchased with bulk discounts. For information, send an e-mail to: info@aerialdancing.com.
Corresponding video content is available on AerialDancing.com.
The moves in this book are part of the larger Born to Fly Curriculum.
More information at www.BorntoFlyCurriculum.com.

When practicing aerial, always perform warm-up exercises before attempting any individual exercises. Also, when practicing aerial, always do so in the presence of a trained professional, with load-tested aerial equipment hanging from load-tested rigging, which has been set up and inspected frequently by rigging professionals, along with crash pads underneath the apparatus. It is recommended that you check with your doctor or healthcare provider before commencing any exercise program, especially one as rigorous as aerial.

Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of this material, there is a real chance of injury in execution of the movements described in this book. The Publisher and all persons involved in the making of this manual will not accept responsibility for injury to any degree, including death, to any person as a result of participation in the activities described in this manual. Purchase or use of this document constitutes agreement to this effect. Furthermore, rigging of aerial equipment is not discussed in this manual. Consult a professional rigger when it comes to using any hanging equipment.

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Preface

This book took much longer than I had anticipated to release. I blame COVID-19, but to be honest, it was a lot of things. The Covid season was hard on my family, as I know many can relate. Right as things were starting to open back up, we lost the lease on our studio, and our AerialWorks Castle Rock local location had to close down. In some ways, I was grateful for a world that now open to life online, for that is now my main way to connect with my students.

Before I lost my local studio, I spent as much time as possible gathering last-minute photos for this book. One positive of the studio closing was that I was able to finish this book because suddenly my time was a lot more open! In addition, I couldn't keep adding to the book. I have sling material coming out my ears, but without a way to film anything at the moment, I cannot continue to make this book any bigger than it already is. Otherwise, I probably would have continued to tinker with changes and additions for years. (It's hard to stop what you love to do!!!)

This season has been hard, but I trust it all worked out as it should. I hope you enjoy the richness and depth of this curriculum as much I enjoyed creating it. These are not just skills for me. They are memories. They are stories. This is my scrapbook, and I'm happy you've chosen to overlap your journey with mine.

Happy Flying,



A front arabesque variation from page 27.

Access the Video Library

A resource that is available right from the comfort of your own home is [AerialDancing.com](https://www.AerialDancing.com) (which is now www.BornToFlyCurriculum.com as well). With a paying subscription you can access all of the moves in this book demonstrated through video by industry experts. If you're a visual learner like me, you will appreciate seeing the move in live action. This can be helpful for quick review before, after (or during!) classes.

Introduction

This book builds on the material in Volume 1, so please make sure to review that book before diving into this one. It will be assumed that the reader is either a teacher or a student working under the guidance of a coach. One great use of this manual is that it helps participants to get on the same page in terms of vernacular and vocabulary.

Even more important than building consistent vocabulary is my vision to see studios build their programming with proper progressions and assessments at the forefront. Students should not be leaping into skills before they have taken steps to prepare the mind and body. This book provides many of the stepping stones to get those leaps in the end!

About This Book

This book starts off with some conditioning drills in **Chapter One**. I find drills a very important part of each class, especially *inversion* work here in Level 2. Regular practice of these will allow the body to grow and maintain strength. Just make sure to keep enough variation in your practice to keep the muscles “guessing”, allowing the mind to stay involved in your training and prevent ruts from growing too strong. Chapter One also includes some foundational vocabulary and other odds and ends that are appropriate when beginning Level 2.

Chapter Two covers arabesques in a brand new way that I created in order to help establish consistent vocabulary for the various ways a body could lean to one side in the sling. The main two types of arabesques are front arabesque and back arabesque. Back arabesque is popular on fabric, where you commonly see it used in conjunction with things like crossback straddle. In sling world, front arabesque is actually the shining start when it comes to crossback straddle (which is the topic of Chapter Eight). Chap-

ter Two also covers running man, as many of the entries fall out easily from arabesques.

Chapters Three & Four cover the pair of reverse skills: catcher’s and seatbelt, respectively. The whole world of sling can be split right down the middle into catcher’s-land and seatbelt-land, and I find it important to juxtapose these two topics for comparison discussions. Chapter Four also covers the hip corset topic, which is where catcher’s and seatbelt are united into one skill together.

Chapter Five is all about getting off your hands for a moment and getting upside-down on your knees and ankles. I cover ankle hangs and knee hangs mainly in this chapter.

I tried to further stay off the hands in **Chapter Six** by spending time around the hips with another pair of reverse skills: side back balance and hip key. Side back balance is one of my favorite skills, so that got a bit more emphasis.

Chapter Seven covers beats and drops. Building a foundation is so important for me that I tend to push drops far back into the curriculum, so there are not as many drops as one might typically expect for this point in the curriculum. Nevertheless, you should find all the classics here.

As I mentioned earlier, **Chapter Eight** covers crossback straddle. It also covers a hodgepodge of skills from fabric. One important topic here is “high catcher’s,” which will be developed more in Level 3.

By the end of Level 2, my expectations for students is that they have a good grasp of a wide range of topics. They should also have super clean inversions, so don’t neglect those drills! What you can look forward to after this level is a season of building harder skills as well as diving deeper into the complexities of sling. But, no hurry. Enjoy the journey!



Chapter 2: Arabesques & Running Man

A few years ago, I noticed that there were so many variations of arabesques that people were doing on sling that I needed to start creating language to distinguish between them all. “Front arabesque” and “back arabesque” are terms you should know well after studying this chapter. I settled on these names based on “front lion” and “back lion” and their connections to the various arabesques. I regret not creating this language in time for the release of Volume 1. The skills are still in my Level 1 curriculum, but the connection is not as obvious as I would like it to be. Anyway, this is a sign that what you are viewing is as fresh as can be in terms of a created curriculum. Parts of it I have been mulling over for years, and parts of it are brand spankin’ new! :)

Arabesque Types

Skill Prerequisite: Flamenco Grip, Standing

Sling Height: Hip Height

Starting Point: Standing

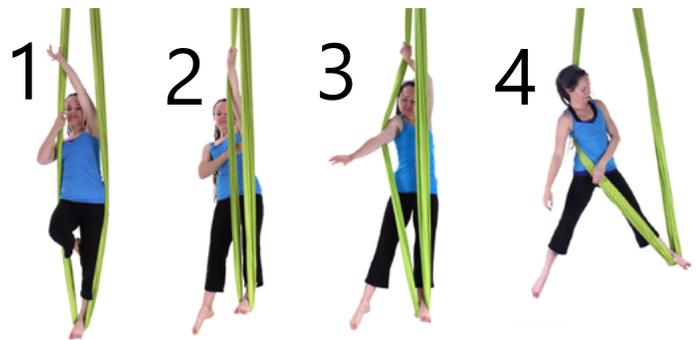
Base Wrap Family: Arabesque

About this move: When I used to ask a group of 10 students to “start in an arabesque”, I would get 10 different positions. It drove me crazy! I finally set to the task of differentiating between the types of arabesques. What you have before you are the ways that I now organize arabesque types. I hope these catch-on to organize aerial sling on a more global scale.

SS Hand => Midline Silk => Basic Front Arabesque

Basic Front Arabesque

Steps 1-4: From standing, flamenco grip your same-arm-as-standing-leg on the opposite silk. Thread your free arm between your body and the silk and then slice in through the silks. Keep your free leg behind the silk. Lean into your front arabesque. (Notice how the silk comes across the front of the hip.)



Front Arabesque to Front Lion

Steps 1-3: From a front arabesque, slide your foot up as you slide your hips down until your leg is horizontal. Pop your foot off the front and transition the loop under the back of the thigh. You are now in front lion.

Corresponds to Front Lion



Transitions Nicely into Running Man Variations

Front Arabesque to Running Man

Steps 1-3: From a front arabesque, sink so that your standing leg is close to horizontal. Lift your bottom leg up and bring it towards your nose to block on the near silk. See more about running man entries later in this chapter.



SUMMARY of ARABESQUE TYPES AND TRANSITIONS

Flamenco Hand	Arrival Pose	Sunken Variation	Transitions to:
<p>Same-Side Hand (as base foot) to Midline Silk</p> 	<p>Basic Front Arabesque</p> 	<p>Sunken Front Arabesque</p> 	<p>Front Lion</p> 
<p>Opposite-Side Hand (as base foot) to Hip Silk</p> 	<p>Basic Back Arabesque</p> 	<p>Sunken Back Arabesque (soon turns into a sacrum hang)</p> 	<p>Back Lion</p> 
<p>Opposite-Side Hand (as base foot) to Midline Silk</p> 	<p>Back Arabesque with Catcher's Crossing at the Ankle</p> 	<p>Wineglass (really have to sink to find this advanced pose!)</p> 	<p>Half-Catcher's</p> 
<p>Same-Side Hand (as base foot) to Hip Silk</p> 	<p>Front Arabesque with Seatbelt Crossing at the Ankle</p> 	<p>Sunken Arabesque (turn out for effect)</p> 	<p>Half-Seatbelt</p> 

Forwards Somersault in Catcher's

Skill Prerequisite: Catcher's

Body Prerequisite: Grip Strength

Sling Height: Hip Height or Higher

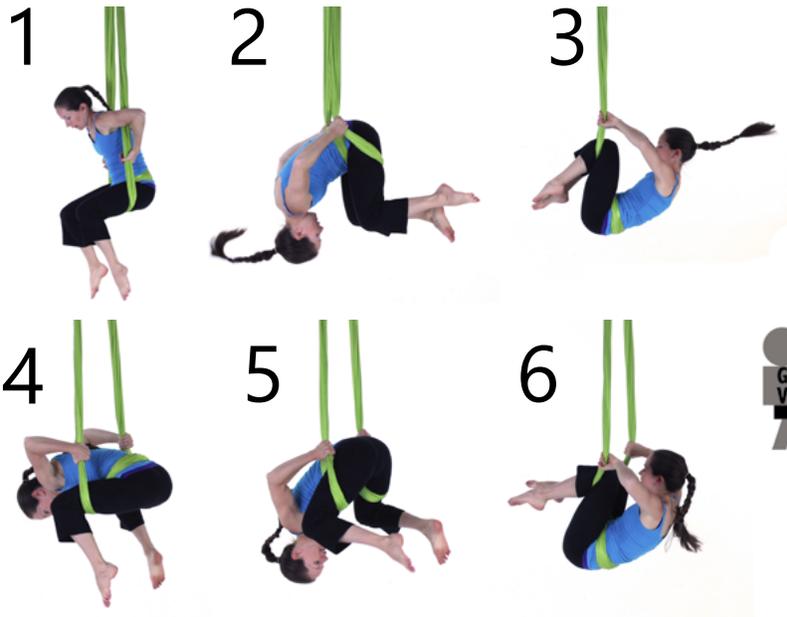
Starting Point: Catcher's

Action Category: Somersaults

About this move: When I was conducting research for my aerial yoga curriculum, I had a teacher suggest this move to me. I didn't think it classified as aerial yoga so I saved it for my sling curriculum instead, where I think it fits perfectly! At the time, it was being taught in beginning aerial yoga classes as a fun trick. These days, teachers wait until a student has developed more grip strength to teach this (which is a good thing).

Forwards Somersault in Catcher's

Steps 1-6: Begin in catcher's. Bring your arms around the front. Keep the hips sunk back to prevent tipping forward during this grip setting process. Bring your chest down towards your knees as you roll forward. You could end in a variety of positions. You might end in a sacrum hang, or you might find it easier or more comfortable to hook the knees again. Or, if you have strong grip and core strength, you can flip back into your catcher's seat (see below).



Level Up: Somersault All the Way Around

With the right hand placement and some commitment, you can make it all the way back to where you started in this somersault.

Keep your legs pressing into the sling as you roll forward. Then press the pinky side of your hand into the sling as you drive your legs straight and down to lift your chest, completing the roll.



Half Catcher's Rolling & Threading

Skill Prerequisite: Half-Catcher's, Side Back Balance

Sling Height: Hip Height

Starting Point: Thigh, Side Back Balance

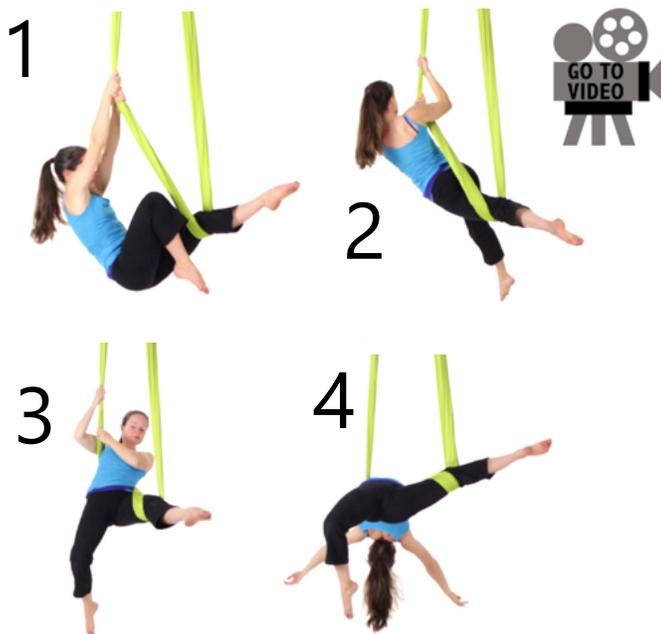
Concept Category: Rolls, Threads, Slices

About this move: The roll from half-catcher's to side back balance was covered at the beginning of this chapter. Review that transition because the skill at the bottom of this page is the retrograde that I asked you to hunt for! I hope you eventually find the ease and enjoyment in these weaves and threads as much as I do.

Knee to Half Catcher's Roll-Up

Steps 1-2: Start with the sling under your knee. Hold on to the mid-line silk with both hands. Lean back and thread your free leg (knee first) into the space between your body and the silk you are holding. Follow this leg's direction as you slice your upper body between the silks. As you roll, keep your hips low enough under the sling so that you are cleanly rolling over your mid-thigh, rather than the top of the thigh. If the sling gets too high (or the leg on the sling too vertical), it can be hard to roll.

Steps 3-4: Keep the silk tucked into your armpit as you continue to roll into the sling. As your back meets the sling, arch the body and open towards the ceiling. Release your hands if you feel balanced in this half-catcher's pose.



Side Back Balance (SBB) Roll to Half Catcher's

Steps 1-2: Begin in a side back balance. Hold both hands on the nearby silk, making sure to keep the silk inside your inner arm. Roll this shoulder (the inside one) forwards to begin the roll.

Steps 3-5: Roll your torso between the silks until you come to the other side. Don't let your lower leg through. Instead, straddle it to the side, so that the silk lands against the top of your thigh. Bend your free leg to match the pose shown.





Intro to Beats

Skill Prerequisite: Mount a high sling

Sling Height: High Height

Base Wrap: Backpack

Featured Action: Beats

About this move: I start students with training momentum as soon as they can climb into a high sling (which is required so your feet don't hit the ground as you're swinging around). Sometimes it takes a while for momentum to feel natural, so lots of practice is required! To help you improve, have a trained eye give feedback.

Bell Beats

Step 1-2: Set your feet wider than hip-width apart. Maintain the distance between your ankles as you initiate movement from your obliques. Contract your obliques and stabilize with your leg adductors as you take your shape up to one side. Eccentrically lengthen down, swinging through to the other side. Stay in the doorway plane. See more on the right.



View from the Side

As you can see from the pictures on the right, the body stays in the doorway plane. Make sure to check the following:

- ribcage is “tucked in”, not popping out
- the pelvis is neutral (not overly tucked anteriorly or posteriorly)
- the hips are not engaging in flexion. They remain extended during the movement and the knees face forwards.
- someone looking from the side should see the body stay in its plane of movement.



Level Up: Add a Pull-up

As you get the hang of the momentum, the body will naturally start to thirst for more. Add height by pulling up at the peak of the swing, making sure to stay in the doorway plane even as you pull up. (The top leg may enter a small degree of external rotation as you add the pull-up, but minimize the hip flexion.)



Teaching & Learning Tips

One thing that helps with beats is to work with breath. Inhale as the legs come up. Exhale them down, etc.

My favorite training technique is to wear ankle weights when practicing beats. It helps you feel the weight of the movement.

Thank you for viewing this preview of The Aerial Sling Manual Vol. 2.

You can download this book at the following websites:

www.BorntoFlyCurriculum.com

(the download link will be emailed to you upon purchase)

www.RebekahLeach.com

(you get the download link right away after purchasing,
highly recommend this site for purchase)