



Have you ever seen an aerial shape, transition, or sequence that stopped you in your tracks because it was so darn unique and interesting?

Are you interested in developing the craft of aerial innovation?
We made this guide for you!

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CREATING INNOVATIVE AERIAL SEQUENCES (Any Apparatus!)



Step 1: Spark Start with a seed

Creation doesn't happen within a vacuum. Every idea has a starting point. We call this a seed. A "seed" can be a starting position, a wrap, a shape, or a short sequence. Here are some of our favorite "seeds" when creating new aerial material.

1. Go back to basics - start with a simple skill that you're already super comfortable with
2. Take inspiration from other artists. Sure, go ahead and scroll insta for inspiration...we'll be playing with and adding on to this seed, so it will morph and change.
3. Make a shape on the ground and recreate it in the air
4. Choose a favorite skill and start at the ending position of it



Step 2: Understand Dissect & Deconstruct

Before the experimentation process begins, it's important to have a clear understanding of your seed.*Hint, this is why it's helpful to have a SIMPLE seed. Here are some questions to ask yourself about your seed:

- 1). What's holding you up?
2. What are the components or "ingredients" of the seed?
3. What body parts are actively holding you in the air, and which ones are more passive?
4. What is the ending position or change that happens (if any)

This deep understanding and attention to detail is essential for safety AND for the creative process.



Step 3:

Experiment

Play the “what if” game



After understanding your seed, it's time to start experimenting. This can be overwhelming, but it's important to keep it simple and be patient.

Start with your seed and simply ask questions.

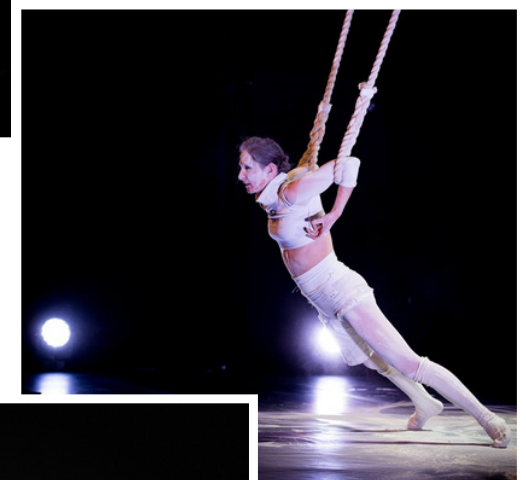
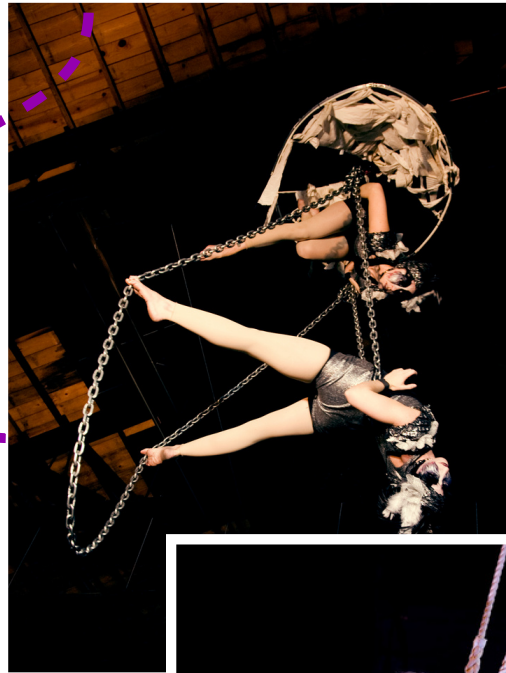
“What if I put my hand here?”

“What if I lean back here?”

“What can be stacked on top: a pullover, a thread-through, a backroll?”

Pay attention to the components you identified in the previous step. For example if you wrapped your leg from back to front, what would happen if you reversed it and wrapped from front to back instead? Ask tons of questions and stay curious.

Pro-tip: Resist the temptation to connect your creation to familiar shapes and pathways. This isn't a game of linking what you know, rather it's a way to find a new place where you've never been. Don't be afraid to take risks and explore the possibilities.





Step 4: YOU choose

Find your aerial voice

Through the experimentation process, you should now have a variety of options. This could be just one or two new shapes. Or there may be some options for taking your aerial seed into a new position or wrap...the start of a sequence. Not all of these options will be winners. This is the magical part of the process where YOU get to decide where you want to take it next.

We'll let you in on a little secret...through this process of choice, you are developing your unique style and artistry; discovering your aerial voice.

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Step 5: Add Layers

We absolutely love finding new shapes, pathways, transitions, or sequences. This is a fantastic foundation to build upon by adding layers. This can help us to find more range of expression in the air...after all, aerial arts is an expressive art form. What kind of layers can you add to your new choreography?

The options are limitless, but here are some of our favorite layers to add to a new movement sequence.

- **Musicality.** Try out your new material with a variety of musical options and see how it affects your movement.
- **Tempo changes.** One of the simplest and perhaps underrated ways to spice up your aerial movement. Add in dynamic tempo changes from super slow mo to turbo speed and try to avoid moving at a medium speed.
- **Gestures.** These can be behavioral or abstract. Gestures can add texture and even narrative context to your choreography.

The more complex the layering, the more this aerial sequence can develop into a full act or even a concept for a show. This is the basis of Paper Doll Militia's devising method; "Vertical Theatre Method." If you want to dive deeper with this approach, stay tuned for upcoming workshops, retreats, and e-courses that delve into our full method.



SUPERCHARGE YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS WITH THESE HELPFUL TIPS:

1 Nothing is Original

Every innovator must recognize that there is no such thing as an “original” idea. Once you surrender to the honest truth that everything has been done before, you will be more free to discover and create. Part of the joy of innovation is the process of discovery itself. That’s why when we find new aerial skills and sequences, we use the word “discovery” rather than “invented.”

We explore possibilities that exist inherently in our bodies and the apparatus - thus it is a discovery when we find something new. Also the idea of discovering something can be true for multiple individuals around the world. Someone else might discover the same thing as you, that doesn’t detract from the value of each of your processes in finding it.



2 Document Everything

One of our most practical and effective tips for aerial innovation is to film all of your exploration sessions...every. single. one.

The most magical moments show up at the most unexpected times. Make sure you caught it on film, so you can recreate and develop those moments.

3 Keep your Friends Close Collaboration is Key

Nothing can beat the power of collaboration. Collaboration allows for a diversity of perspectives and skillsets to come together and create something greater than the sum of its parts. A simple way to incorporate this powerful tool is to follow the above steps, but with a partner or small group.

In playing with finding new pathways or body shapes together, you’ll inevitably make different choices. So you can be inspired by the ways each of your bodies want to go and find something unique together.



4 Keep your Enemies Closer Your Inner Critic

Try to recognize the voice of your inner critic. If you find you're dissatisfied and none of the options you found are feeling fruitful, that may mean you need to spend more time in the experimentation phase. It can be helpful to come back to the same seed over multiple sessions (we do this ALL the time).

If your inner critic starts to take over, and you're constantly doubting your creations, this can be a challenging creative block. If you are not loving any of the options, just pick one and move forwards with adding layers. In the layering phase, you might find something you like about and if not, at the very least you will have had a good work-out. Experimenting takes a lot of endurance, so nothing will have been wasted. :)

5 Don't be precious about your creations

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6 Don't quit before the miracle happens

Finding unique aerial creations is like any other creative endeavor...it can be unpredictable and nonlinear. Cultivate patience with yourself and your process. Find joy in the small discoveries, and above all, don't quit before the miracle happens.

We can't tell you how many times we've been in the trenches, feeling like nothing was flowing. But we kept on keeping on, sometimes, leaving it to come back to it again later. The rewards of creative perseverance can be even more fulfilling when you've made it through the dark forest of the creative process.