

The floor is not your enemy

by Phil Hardie & Mathias Poelman

Principles/Aims:

- To realise the floor can catch you rather than hurt you.
 - To move silently across the floor.
- To realise everyone can & should find their own style and method of moving when achieving a specific move.
- To break one specific move into many small parts so that learners can experience a clear and very achievable progression.
- To give a free and open space for individuals to offer their own variations on one specific move and those related.

An explanation of the above aims is given to the group to start, stressing the points of moving silently and adapting the demonstrated movements to individual's ability, style and preference. Open sharing of participants own variations on the movements is actively encouraged.

5 - 10mins

Warm up and build group cohesion by walking around the space making eye contact with each other, smile, say hello, make contact with each other. Pay attention to walking through the whole of the foot from heel to toes feeling every part of the foot and grounding your movement to the floor.

The movement can be free for all, there are no rules the teacher(s) gives ideas and guides learners to explore possibilities, arms should not be static but flow freely with the movement.

10 – 15 mins

The movement progresses from standing down through many levels to the ground, using hands, feet, legs, shoulders until finally you give yourself entirely to the floor and explore rolling over the floor. Exploration of moving around, over and with the other learners is demonstrated & encouraged including body contact. If and when exciting combinations of movements are found in partnership or individually these can be explored, practiced and refined.

Example: one discovers a nice roll (could be 'back to back') with another this couple can practice this and refine the movement and demonstrate it for the rest of the group. This can apply for an individuals' move also.

15 – 20 mins

At this stage hopefully a specific move eg. forward roll, shoulder roll, macaco may have come out from the group, or offered up from the coach. NB this workshop can work towards a predetermined goal ie forward roll or be left more open to allow for ideas to come from the group.

Once a specific move has been identified as our goal (Macaco) the coach forms a more structured method to teach it. This I believe should be determined by the coach and their own preference however one clear and effective method is to have the class move across the floor in lines. The coach can demonstrate successive movements which build towards the goal. A move can be broken down into many easier and critically less freighting movements which evolve towards the goal. By first introducing variations of the goal which keep very close to the ground and allow the floor to give maximum support throughout the movement learners can begin to feel the type of movements required for the move without fear. Confidence and the muscle knowledge required for the goal grow directly with each evolution of the movement and in this way learners are in full control of the risk involved and can confidently practice the movement without fear.

Of course the coach is always available to give feedback, suggestions and spotting (if appropriate) but this method allows learners to develop toward a high level skill in full control.

In our example we worked toward the macaco and variations. A video of the stages of progression from the floor to the full move can be seen on the database. (the video footage has hopefully been uploaded by Joel from Franch.)

5 – 10 mins.

Free space and time at the end of the session can be allowed for personal practice, group sharing, participant variations. Or perhaps a game where everyone performs their own version of the move at whatever level of the evolution they are most comfortable as silently as possible.

5 – 10 mins.

Group cool down and stretch.