

Teaching Tumbling to Preschoolers

By Patti Komara

Cartwheel Obstacle Course

(as shown on video)

- Bunny Hops with hands and feet
- Side Bunny Hops on vinyl floor beams with numbers on the beam for hands
- Raised folded panel mat with red and blue facing up “Hands on red, kick to blue, I can do it, how about you?”
- Down an incline with frogs
- Over ropes and cones with arrows
- Cartwheel Mat
- Rope tied to trapezoid piece
- Racing Car
- Incline mats on their sides and kick between them
- Cartwheel in between straight vinyl strips
- Over a fish or duck on vinyl beam
- Off top of an incline to the floor
- Alley of cones with stars
- 60 x 10 incline-two in a row down the incline
- The wheel-five cones with ropes as the spokes and kick over the ropes
- Set up two donut halves into an “S” and cartwheel on the curves
- **Bonus Station:** Two folded panel mats pushed close together to encourage kicking higher

Other Ways to Teach Cartwheel

- Left and right cartwheels on the Fun Tunnel
- Stacking Snowman
- Beach Towel
- Stacked Panel Mat-unfold as they get better
- Clock Face-hands on 8:00 and 10:00 for right cartwheels, 2:00 and 4:00 for left cartwheels
- Arrows (or hands) on the Fun Tunnel (Blockbuster)

Other Ideas:

1. Smiley face - First foot on ear, hands on eyes, second foot on other ear
2. Yellow Brick Rope - Take a flat rope and shape it like a snail. Have the kids put their hands on the inside and cartwheel around to the fatter part.
3. Two folded panel mats to cartwheel in between. Push them closer to make it harder.

Detailed Explanations of Core Skills

The following are the main skills in preschool tumbling. Each skill featured in this book is accompanied with detailed teaching steps, possible variations, drills, and combinations. They should be reviewed and worked on at every lesson. Have your more advanced students practice variations while the other children in the class concentrate on the core skill.

Cartwheel

Prerequisites

1. Handstands (Horsey kicks to figure out lunge foot for cartwheels and handstands)
2. True understanding of the lunge on both legs
3. Doggy Broken Leg Walk
4. Bonus= Bunny Hops/Side Bunny Hops-Try bunny hops with feet in a Frisbee or do the front bunny hops on a long strip of bubble wrap-FUN!

Teaching Steps

1. Place hands on a raised surface and kick both legs around doing a bunny hop. A rainbow stacked panel mat works the best, because then you can say, "Hands on red, kick to blue, I can do it, how about you?" Or, just use a red mat and a blue mat. You could also use a trapezoid piece or a low beam.
2. Start in a lunge with both arms up high, elbows by the ears. Shift the weight from one leg, over into the cartwheel and land in a lunge on the opposite leg.
3. Emphasize the even 1-2-3-4 rhythm and say, "hand, hand, foot, foot" starting and ending in a lunge.
4. Have the student do a cartwheel off the top of the incline to the floor.
5. Have them go down the incline to work on their kicking and bringing their second leg around as close to their last hand as they can. Watch so they don't over rotate and fall.

Teaching Tips and Stations

1. Use props such as handprints, footprints, or chalk to visually cue them where to put their hands and feet.
2. If necessary, you can allow them to do a side cartwheel first to get the feeling, but teach them a front cartwheel, starting and ending in a big lunge.
3. If a student doesn't kick high enough, put barriers in their way to make them kick higher. Such as:
 - a. Use a jump rope stuck under a trap piece or a stacked panel mat. As the students put their hands on the mat and kick over the rope, the teacher raises the rope higher and higher. This will encourage the students to get their feet over the rope and kick to a high cartwheel.
 - b. Stack up foam blocks and have them kick over the blocks
 - c. Place two incline mats on their sides and have the students kick for a cartwheel between them
4. Be sure to "ride" over the second hand
5. Keep in wide straddle throughout

6. Use chalk and make a big smiley face on the mat. Have them put their first foot on the first ear, their hands on the eyes, and land on the second ear
7. Cartwheel on a carpet strip
8. Chalk their hands and feet to see if they have the proper placement.
9. Tell them to watch their first foot and bring it in very closely to their hands.
10. Stacking Snowman-Spread the group out for cross mat tumbling. Put a small hoop in front of each student. Have the children run over and get three foam blocks from the pit. Next tell them to stack the blocks up one at a time and get them to kick over the snowman's bottom, middle, and then head. Try a fourth one for his hat. Can they kick over the blocks without knocking them over?
11. Yellow Brick Rope-Use any clothesline-type rope and shape it like a snail. Have the students start in the middle and do a cartwheel by putting their hands on the rope. As the rope gets bigger and wider, so does their cartwheel.
12. For your students who get confused with which hand to put down first, put stickers on their hands and feet, or put an elastic wristband on the appropriate wrist to help them remember.
13. Do cartwheels over ropes, cones, beanie babies, any stuffed animal, low beams, and carpet strips.
14. Do cartwheels on beach towels, dishtowels, cartwheel mats, and carpet squares.
15. Alley of Cones-Place two parallel rows of cones, connected by jump ropes, in a line with hoops on the floor. Wherever they see a hoop, do a cartwheel.
16. Place two trapezoid pieces or stacked panel mats close together on the long side. Have them do cartwheels between them to force their cartwheels to be straighter.
17. The Wheel-Put five cones and four ropes like the spokes of a wheel. Have the students kick over each of the ropes to do their cartwheels.
18. Cartwheel Castle Walls. Place panel mats or skill cushions on their sides to make walls, so the kids can cartwheel between them. Tell the students they are princes and princesses cartwheeling through the castle. "Hurry, there is a dragon coming!"
19. Using the big 60 x 10 incline, have them do two cartwheels in a row. Then, go to the mat and do continuous cartwheels all the way down the mat.
20. Stand a student on a stacked panel mat. Have them place their hands on the mat and land with their feet on the floor. As they get better, unfold the mat so they get closer and closer to the ground.
21. Clock Face- Use chalk and make a clock face on the mat in front of each student. Tell the kids to place their hands on the 2:00 and 4:00 or the 8:00 and 10:00 (depending on their cartwheel leg) and kick around doing a cartwheel.
22. Racing Car- Using chalk, draw a car on the mat. Have the students place their first foot on the rear wheel and their hands on the windshields. Kick the last foot to the front wheel of the car. Have them name their favorite racecar driver.
23. Arrows on the Fun Tunnel- Spread the Fun Tunnel on the floor. Mark arrows with chalk, one to the left and then the next one to the right alternating all four colors. Tell them to do their cartwheel on the first panel and then the second, etc.
24. L/R Cartwheels on the Fun Tunnel-Same as above, but each time the student goes over the Fun Tunnel have them alternate between their left side and right side cartwheels.
25. Down the Fun Tunnel-Thinking of the four point cartwheel (hand, hand, foot, foot), place them one at a time on each square of the Fun Tunnel.
26. Take two donut halves and lay them on the floor in an "S" shape. Have the students place their hands on the top of the donuts and kick around for a cartwheel right on top of the curve.

Spotting

1. Stand behind the student. Cross arms, hold their waist, and help them turn over. If the child can get over, but has bent knees, stop them in the middle by holding their legs in straddle and grasping their knees to help them straighten their legs.

Common Errors

1. Not putting hands down properly
2. Not keeping the 1-2-3-4 rhythm
3. Not enough straddle
4. Bringing the second leg down first
5. Not kicking the legs high enough
6. Mixing up which foot is their cartwheel foot
7. Not kicking their first foot hard enough under them to easily stand up in lunge

Variations

1. 1-handed (both near arm and far arm cartwheels)
2. Continuous
3. Running
4. Back and forth
5. Dive
6. Hand on wrist
7. Step on hand
8. 1/4 turn in

Combinations

1. Straddle roll to squat, forward roll step-out to cartwheel
2. Front scale to handstand, forward roll step-out to cartwheel
3. Cartwheel, step through to backward roll to kneescale
4. Cartwheel, 1-handed cartwheel, round-off, backward roll
5. 1-handed cartwheel, round-off, backward roll to straddle stand
6. Forward roll step-out, cartwheel ½ turn in, backward roll, tuck jump
7. Handstand forward roll step-out, 1-handed cartwheel, round-off, jump ½ turn
8. Cartwheel ¼ turn in, backward roll
9. Cartwheel ½ turn, handstand forward roll
10. Cartwheel, chassé, cartwheel

This is an excerpt from [#500 Fast Track Training System for Preschool and Beginner Gymnastics](#). Available at [tumblebear.com](#) as an instant download or hard copy. Also, while you're there, subscribe to Patti's [FREE Tumblebear Tips](#). You'll get articles on management, marketing, lesson plan ideas, and free handouts! Also, like us on [Facebook](#).

