

Under the Big Top



Movement Objectives



Shape
Triangles and cones

Space

Direction: forwards and backwards
Moving in a straight line

Relationships

Counter-balances

Warm up

Imagine they are at the circus in the audience - sitting down in a space

- Applaud
- Look up high to watch the trapeze artists above their heads
- Laugh at the clowns
- Point to the acrobats
- Cover their eyes when they watch the tightrope walker
- Eat their 'refreshments' including popcorn and cotton candy

Stand up and step inside the circus ring. Start walking around inside the big top. When the music stops ask them to freeze. Include...

- Travelling forwards and backwards
- Walking in a straight line
- Making triangle shapes when they freeze

Finish with a big stretch – make a final triangle shape and stretch out through the arms and legs.

Spoitoresa - Mahala Rai Banda



Big Tops

Thunder and Blazes - South Shore Concert Band



Discuss the circus – what is it? What kinds of acts are involved? And where does it take place?.

Ask the children to make Big Top shapes with their bodies – triangle and cone shapes. Who can hold it still? Can they make one...

- Standing up?
- On the floor?
- With their hands and feet on the ground?
- And their own version?

Can the children create a big top shape with a partner? Try out some counter-balances with a friend. For example...

- Face each other and press their hands onto their partners and then lean in towards them. Can they widen the base by slowly and carefully moving their feet away from their partner?
- One person could make a table top shape on their hands and knees. Can their partner stand behind them to make the pointy top?
- Stand back to back and keep their shoulders in contact with their partner. Can they widen the base by slowly and carefully moving their feet away from their partner?

Divide the class into two groups and ask each half to share back their most favourite big top shape, either with a partner or by themselves. Hold a competition – who can hold the shape the stillest?

Still in the two groups, ask the first half to do their big top shape again. This time, the other half are invited to 'enter' the big top by going through the shapes. Emphasise children going through slowly and carefully so they don't knock the big top (children) over.

Swap over so the other half have chance to move through the shapes to enter the circus.

Circus Acts

L'autre Valse d'Amelie (Quatuor a Cordes et Piano) - Yann Tiersen



Try out some of the acts that might appear at a circus – ask the children for suggestions or try out these ideas below...

Tight ropes. Balance along a straight line, placing one foot carefully in front of the other.

- You could use masking tape lines along the floor to help guide them and add to the atmosphere.
- Children could jump from one line to the next – can they land safely with two feet on the line? And end with both legs bent?
- Travel down the line sideways to help the children to cross their midline (to develop their brain communication and core strength). Each time they take a step to the side, get them to cross their second foot either in front / behind the first leg. Can they do it without twisting their bodies?

Human Cannonballs. Prepare by getting on your goggles, crash helmet and crouching down low

- Blast off through the air – travel fast and then stop
- Can they spin through the air? Turn around whilst moving in the space
- Can they roll along the floor, keeping themselves tucked up like a ball?

Trapeze. Swing forwards and backwards through the air.

- Work on their technique – start by rising onto the balls of the feet, then suspend in the air, before falling forwards for a few paces.
- Can they let go of their own trapeze and then leap onto another one?
- Can they leap onto someone else's trapeze and travel with them for a few swings? Or swap with someone's trapeze?

Choreography

In pairs. Take it in turns to travel through the space, demonstrating some of the circus act ideas. Remind the leaders to make their actions clear and slow. Remind the followers to work on mirroring and replicating the partner's movements as accurately as possible.

Can the children think of any other acts that might perform in a circus? This might include fire-eaters, acrobats and jugglers. Ask them to try out their skills with their partner.

Performance & Opportunity

Sit in a circle – to represent the circus ring. You could use a large elastic band to make the circle shape if you have one.

Performance & Opportunity Cont.

Ask for volunteers to enter the circus ring – they will demonstrate some of their circus skills they've been practicing from the session today. They can choose to perform by themselves or with a partner. Choose between 3-6 children at a time (depending on the size of your circus ring). Ensure everyone who wants to perform gets chance to do so.

Discuss the performance afterwards – what did they really enjoy? Which acts looked just like the real version?

The Stand of the Tide - Yann Tiersen



Cool Down ↓

Walk around the room – use the time to get out of character. Shake out their arms, legs, torsos, bottoms, heads (very gently) to remove their circus act characters.

Finish with some animal circus yoga...

Snake pose – strengthening backs and opening chests

- Lie on tummies
- Push up on hands in cobra pose
- Hiss with mouth and gently sway from side to side

Lion pose – brilliant for getting rid of stress

- Sit with bottoms on knees
- Lift up onto high knees, roar and stick tongue out, hands out to sides of face (like claws)

DANCE

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