

03

Master the Perfect Somersault

Before they are banned at your school



CLONKED



BUMPS AND
BRUISES

REQUIRES

- Lawn or Soft Play Area

DURATION

DIFFICULTY

WARNING

Whenever you are learning a new skill - especially one that involves flinging yourself at the ground - it's important to start slowly and think through each move before you do it. Note that we're talking about a forward roll, not a flip.

HOW-TO

At first, somersaulting may not seem very useful. But, if you practice it until it becomes second nature, you may find yourself somersaulting instead of scraping up your hands or knees next time you trip and fall.

1. Prepare. Find a nice clear area that is free of sticks and rocks.
2. Stand with one foot slightly in front of the other.
3. Start the roll. Lean down, tuck your chin, and imagine curling up into a ball as you fall forward. Place your hands on the floor in front of you as you encounter the ground.
4. Roll over. Keep leaning forward, curling up as you go and keep your back curved as you contact the ground on the wide part of your back between your shoulder blades. If any part of your head touches the ground, you haven't curled up enough. If the ground hits you on the back with a thump, then you probably didn't lean down far enough.
5. Follow through. Try to maintain your momentum and roll up onto your feet.

Repeat steps 2 through 5 until you can smoothly roll up onto your feet every time.

Like all gymnastics, somersaulting takes some practice. Part of what you are learning is to flip upside down and not get all discombobulated. Discombobulation comes from confusion in

Supplementary Data

Somersaults and cartwheels have been banned at some schools because of the potential for injury - a perfect example of what is referred to as "fear-based" decision making. The possibility that a child might be injured by doing a somersault is too scary to think about, so the activity is banned instead of teaching students how to do it safely.

A somersault is a forward roll in which your back contacts the ground. A cartwheel is when just your hands touch the ground, and a flip is when nothing touches the ground except your feet.

The world record for somersaulting was set by Ashrita Furman when he covered more than 12 miles as he performed 8341 consecutive somersaults without stopping.

your vestibular system, a group of internal organs and parts of your brain that help you keep track of what is up and what is down.

Once you have a good somersault technique, try doing two or three in a row and see what your vestibular system thinks of that. If that's not enough to discombobulate you, try doing it with your eyes closed.