

BARRY PUBLICATION

5 Golden Rules for Rigging Acrobatic Equipment

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Every day hundreds of artists, students and adults use acrobatic equipment in their line of work, at school or at play. It is imperative that this type of equipment be fixed on safe anchor points to ensure proper function and the safety of users and bystanders alike.

While great strides have been made in the last decade in the understanding of anchorage points and rigging in general, we nonetheless continue to witness many potentially dangerous situations in which the lives of users of acrobatic equipment may be at great risk. For this reason, Barry Cordage has taken the initiative to publish this brief reference guide on safe rigging. We believe that in sharing our expertise, we may be able to potentially reduce the risk of accidents and make rigging of acrobatic equipment a more positive experience.

In this Barry Update, you will find a summary of 5 Golden Rules to help you improve on proper rigging of your acrobatic equipment.

Golden Rule # 1: Safety above all else!

The owner of the equipment, as well as the users, must use the equipment responsibly, and continuously place security at the forefront of all their plans and actions. An accident can happen very quickly and the risk of serious injury due to faulty installations or misuse of equipment is very high.

Golden Rule # 2: Plan your installations properly.

Did you know that the choice and design of anchor points as well as the design of acrobatic equipment should all be the exclusive responsibility of a qualified person? For example, in the province of Québec, in Canada, such work is within the scope of duties and responsibilities of a professional such as an engineer. Engineers are generally recognized as competent persons who are responsible regarding all matters of safety for the users and the general public. In most jurisdictions, it is considered illegal for a professional rigger to plan an anchorage system without the approval of a qualified engineer who has the authority to certify the entire rigging system including anchor points and any acrobatic apparatus such as an aerial ring or a trapeze.

Golden Rule # 3: Always choose rigging equipment that is appropriate for human loads.

It is possible that an anchor system may have in use numerous components which may derive from various industries (i.e. rigging and lifting equipment) and are designed for non-human loads. Pulleys, hooks and certain fiber ropes or slings and other boat rigging equipment may all be unsafe and inappropriate for the lifting of human beings.

We strongly urge you to be extremely rigorous in your selection of pulleys, carabiners and all other rigging accessories. Consult an engineer before making your decision in order to ensure that the components you have chosen are certified for their intended application.

Every year, we receive numerous reports of nautical and lifting equipment that is faulty. Quite often, these cases were the result of wrong equipment selection.

Golden Rule # 4: Training is an essential factor in safety.

Make sure that you or someone in your surrounding is competent with regards to safety. Anyone who is rigging acrobatic equipment must be trained to do so and must update his or her training regularly.

Did you know that the majority of people who attend training courses forget more than 80% of what they learned within a few weeks or months if they do not practice what they have learned? It is not enough to merely attend training courses. Continuously updating and practicing what you've learned in order to retain and increase your knowledge is essential.

Golden Rule # 5: Your safety through inspection of equipment.

It is important to inspect your equipment before and after each use. Manufacturers' instructions usually require that a formal inspection should be performed at least once a year by a competent person (other than the user). The result of this inspection must be recorded in an inspection log which should include the inspection instructions and any other documentation regarding the equipment as well as the engineer's certification. Also make sure that you do the appropriate maintenance of your equipment to prolong its lifetime by following the manufacturer's recommendations.

No equipment is worth the price of a human life! Never hesitate to retire from service a piece of equipment that you no longer trust.

Conclusion

The lives of our children, friends, fellow workers and clients are important to us and we believe that all users of acrobatic equipment should, at the very least, apply the above measures to assure their safety. Unfortunately, we often only realize our shortsightedness after an accident has already occurred. Take the time to ensure that your rigging equipment is adequate and that all system components, including the anchorage and support points, have been seen and certified by an engineer or equivalent authority so that your experience is a safe and positive one!

If you need any technical support, or have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Safety always comes first!

www.barry.ca/circus-equipment/circus-equipment.htm



If you would like more information on this topic, please contact **Marc André Pilon** at the Barry Centre of Excellence – mapilon@barry.ca

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