

Lesson 9: Snakes

Ex 9.1 How to Learn Snakes

15 min

Snakes use 4 balls to create a character, an animated creature - good snakes look awesome.

Snakes are a difficult movement to learn to do well, they require precise control of the balls. The following method should help you get some solid progress within a couple of hours.

Before starting to learn snakes, you need a smooth control of:

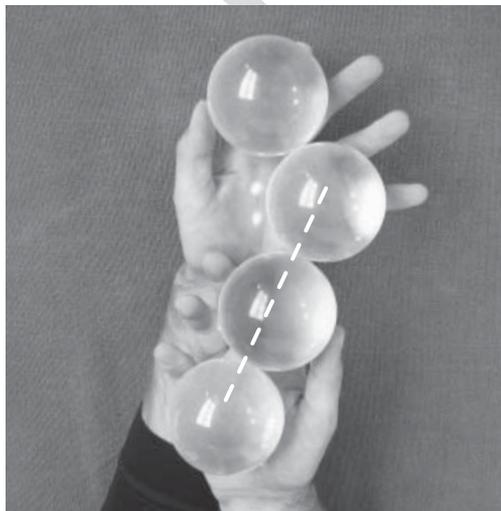
- Lesson 4: Palm spinning 2 balls in One Hand (both directions, both hands)
- Lesson 6: Dead Snakes
- Lesson 8: Mind Games

Lesson Duration: 40min first time.

Be prepared to invest a few weeks or even months, to get them really clean and well presented. It will be worth it.

Balls: 4 acrylics or similar smooth and slippery balls.

1 Start in this position: In each of the positions shown, there are 3 balls in a line and 1 offset.



Focus on making this 3 ball line clean and straight. Beginners usually have a step in their line between the second and third ball (where their hands meet). Work hard to get rid of this. This level of control is required to make snakes clean, and it's this that makes them difficult!

2 Move your left hand slightly to the left and move your right hand to the right.



Keep the four balls in contact with their neighbours, with no clicking.



Snakes: pay particular attention to the back ball, it's often lazy, ruining the whole snaky effect.
- Official Contact Advisory Service

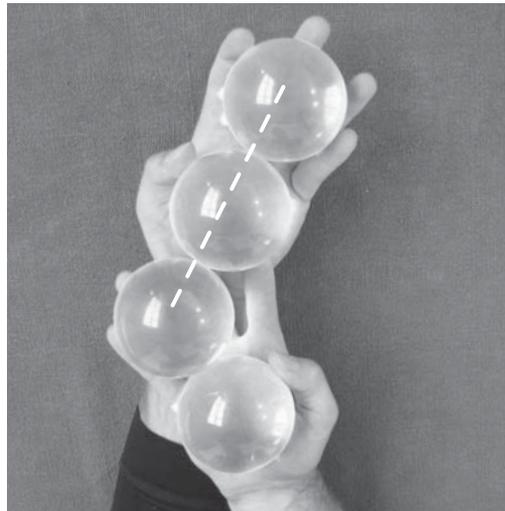


3 Palmspin both hands a quarter turn (both inwards) to make this shape, the mirror image of the starting position.



Check that all 4 balls are still flat (all 4 balls are at the same height when viewed from the side).

4 Move your left hand to the right and your right hand to the left.



Keep all the balls in contact and make sure the 3 balls at the front make a clean straight line.

5 Palmspin the balls in both hands about one quarter turn and you should be back to the start position (below).



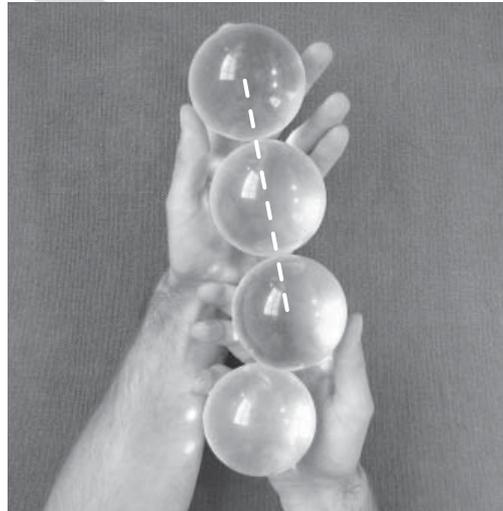
Ex 9.2 Making These into Smooth Snakes

20 min

6 Practice the previous four movements until your muscle memory can make each of the positions very cleanly. This may take a while. A couple of hours or even a few days, if you have high standards, but first time, just practice for another 15 minutes.

Don't try to smooth it out yet... that will come in the next steps.

7 First, you need to minimise the size of the movements, so they are half those shown in the previous pictures. Like this:



Polish these micro movements. Again, this should take a while, but first time round just give it 10 minutes, then move onto step 8.

8 Then to make the snake, start blending steps 1 to 5 into each other. Step 3 should start before step 2 has finished and so on. This will become your smooth snake.

Snake Superhints

- Keep the snake at an even tempo, slow and smooth.
- Pay attention to the back ball, the tail of the snake, which has a habit of getting lazy when people are learning. Keep all 4 balls travelling the same distance side to side.

More Snakes

If you want to learn more snakes, you'll find 2 whole chapters on snakes in the Inspiration section, including the advanced Helical Snakes Workshop.

Adv Ex 9.3 Snakes Everywhere

Snakes become a lot more interesting when they move around. Stand up and experiment with moving them all around your body and around the room.

When you think you can DO snakes, and you want a challenge, try this: repeat Lesson 6 - Dead Snakes and this time, bring your snake to life in every position, animate it, so it crawls between each position.