

The Monkey Bar

The Monkey Bar is a low-priced trick that's easy to operate, takes little or no room in your case, and can be done surrounded (with a little care). In other words, it's a perfect trick for birthday parties.

The standard routine for the monkey bar is a sucker gag, in which the children think they've caught you messing up, but you fool them in the end. As is, it's a fine routine, and lends itself to many individual interpretations. However, it's never a good idea to have more than one sucker gag in a show, and when I acquired the Monkey Bar trick, I already had a sucker gag. What I came up with was a non-sucker gag routine for the Monkey Bar.

Another way to avoid too many sucker gags in a show is to turn them around so they happen to you. Since you are a comedy performer, it's only appropriate that you should be the brunt of your own jokes and gags.

Here is a standard routine for the Monkey Bar:

"Would you like to see the greatest trick in the whole world?" Kids answer YES! "OK, here it is..." Display monkey bar. "Pretty neat, huh!" If built up properly, the kids will react as though it was the stupidest thing they've ever seen. "No, really, it's the best! Here, I'll show you. I have a stick with three ropes that go right through it, and on this rope is a ring tied on tight. I will make this ring jump from this rope, all the way over to this rope, as if by magic! Watch...." Brings hands behind back, turn monkey bar around, and bring back to front. This needs to be done quickly and smoothly, with no hesitation

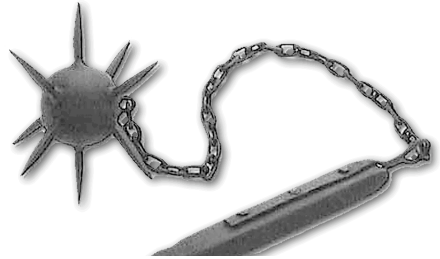
"There! Pretty amazing, isn't it!!" Of course, the children will let you know that you turned it around behind your back.

Continue on when the noise dies down to a small roar. "As if that wasn't enough, I will now make the ring jump back to this rope, as if by magic. Watch!" Again, turn the Monkey Bar around behind your back, and bring it out front. "Didn't I tell you this was the most amazing trick of all times! Every time I perform this trick, I am more and more amazed." All this time, the children will be going nuts. Finally begin hearing them, and react.

"What! I turned it around?! That's ridiculous! Watch, I'll do it again. If you think I turn it around, you tell me. Now watch closely. I will make this ring jump from this rope, all the way over to this rope, as if by magic. Watch!" Bring Monkey Bar behind back, and do the secret move. This you'll need to practice so it's fast, smooth and without hesitation. Bring it around front, and pause long enough for everyone to see that the ring is now in the middle. Point to it so it's emphasized

"How could I have turned it around? If I turn the stick around, the ring stays in the middle."

Here is the routine I wrote. For this, you'll need to make a few changes to the monkey bar. Take off the ropes, and put in lengths of chain. Take off the ring, replace with a spiked ball, so now the monkey bar looks like a medieval weapon hanging on the wall. I'll bet you could find a lightweight plastic spiked ball on eBay. They're known as a "flail" or a "mace".



IN THE DAYS OF YORE:

The emperor's favorite nephew had just read a book on magic, so it was decreed that he should present a royal performance of his prestidigitational skills for that evening's gala ball. Unfortunately, the budding young magician did not bother to practice at all.

**Sample page from "Kids Think It's Funny", available at
www.MisterGreggy.com/shopping/#Books**

The party was a thriving success, with dignitaries from dozens of kingdoms in attendance. At the announcement of the evening's magical entertainment, an expectant hush fell over the assembled crowd, as all eyes turned towards the brightly lit stage. The curtains parted, and out walked the royal nephew magician.

With a nervously twitching hand, he pulled a weapon off the wall, and attempted to duplicate the trick he read about in the magic book, the trick he never practiced. "I will make this spiked ball jump from here, all the way over to here, as if by magic!" (Bring the monkey bar behind your back, turn it around, then back to the front.)

He didn't even come close to fooling the audience, but they dare not voice their disbelief. This was the emperors favorite nephew, and it was not healthy to displease the King. The King, by the way, was amazed at his nephew's trick.

The nephew did it again, (repeat the same move as before, turning it around behind your back), only this time, a young child in the room spoke out in a loud, shrill voice that was heard by all... "That's not magic, He turned it around behind his back!" There was a hushed, frightened gasp heard through-out the crowd, followed by deadly silence as all eyes turned toward the King, then towards the nephew.

Merlin, the real magician, saw what happened and decided to help. With a wave of his hand, the most amazing thing happened. On the nephew's next attempt, his trick had a most surprising finish, and the kingdom was saved!" (Swing monkey bar behind back, do trick move, then reveal the spiked ball on the center rope).

This routine could be a masterpiece. Treat it as a storyteller would, changing your voice and mannerisms with each character. Act out the nervousness of the nephew, the brashness of the little boy, the terror of the crowd. Costume elements would add a lot also, perhaps audience volunteers.