

**How To  
Spin  
A  
Plate**

By J. Lockwood  
& 'Company of Fools'



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# Introduction

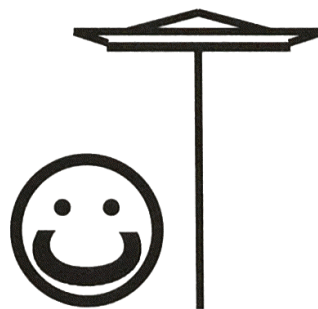
Spinning a plate is something that almost anyone can do, it is not a specific skill or art form reserved purely for clowns, performers, or circus folk...

## **-Yes You Can Spin a Plate-**

It doesn't matter what your age, ability, or shoe size, what is most important is your willingness to try new things, and maybe make a few mistakes.

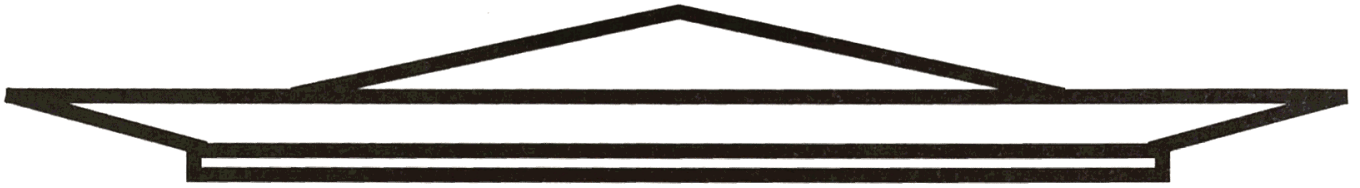
Don't panic, we're not going back to school, learning can be fun, in fact we are always learning new things without even realising. While learning any new thing we all make mistakes, this is ok, in fact, if you make no mistakes at all, then you can already do it...!

**-The More We Drop The More We Are Learning!-**



# Getting Started

So here goes... are you ready to learn to spin a plate?



Firstly make sure you have enough space around you, this can often be more than you think, make sure there is nothing fragile, breakable, precious, or spillable nearby, so move that cup of tea!

How long will it take to learn? Well that will vary from person to person, don't be put off by some who learn quickly, and try not to get frustrated if you feel it is taking too long, when it comes to plate spinning there is always something new to learn, every little bit of practice helps. It is a good idea to make sure you have enough time, 10 minutes or more is excellent, but if you have less than that, don't worry, as long as you want to play, it will help...

## **-Remember-**

Positive mental attitude.

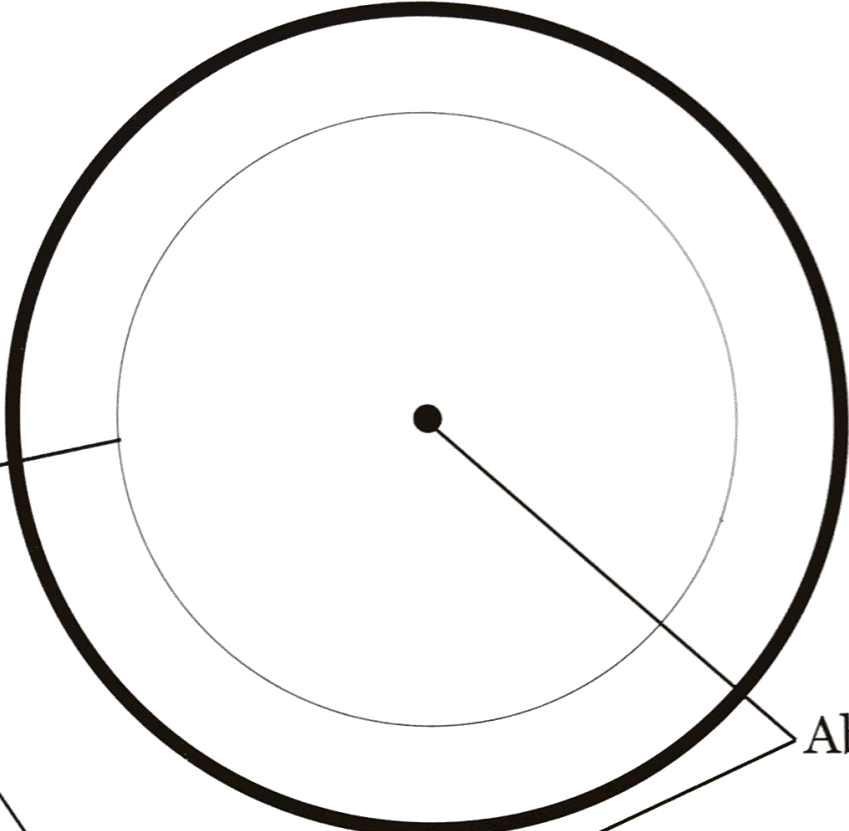
We all learn through our mistakes.

Don't get frustrated... put your spinning plate down, take a break, and come back to it later!

Practice makes perfect.

Plate spinning should be fun!

Above



Dip

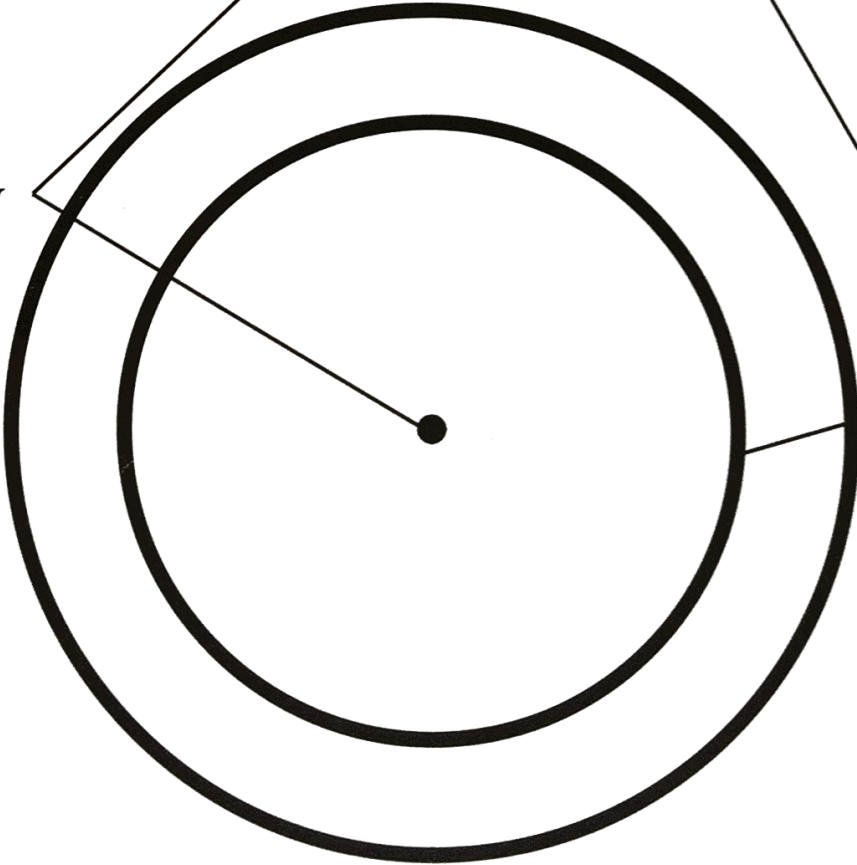
Above Centre

Side View



Centre Below

Rim

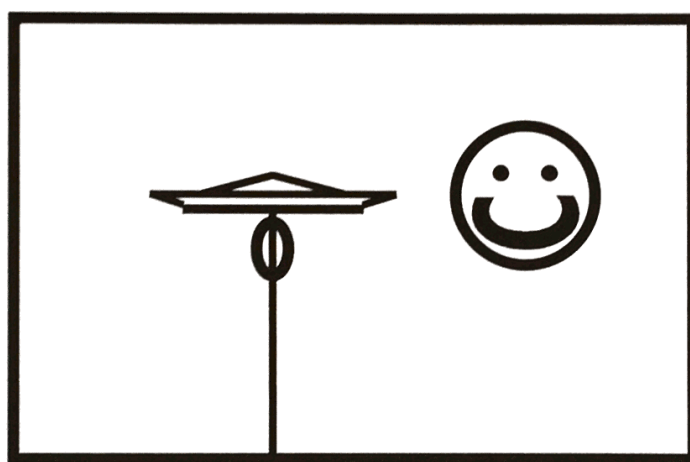


Below

# The Easy Way

Spinning a plate the easy way can make the plate spin a bit wobbly and not very fast, though with a little practice is pretty easy.

\*Hold the plate stick in one hand, near the 'pointy' end. Place the plate on top of the stick balanced at the 'centre below', this is easier than it sounds!



At this point it will look as if the plate is spinning from a little distance, although it is not, it's just balanced...

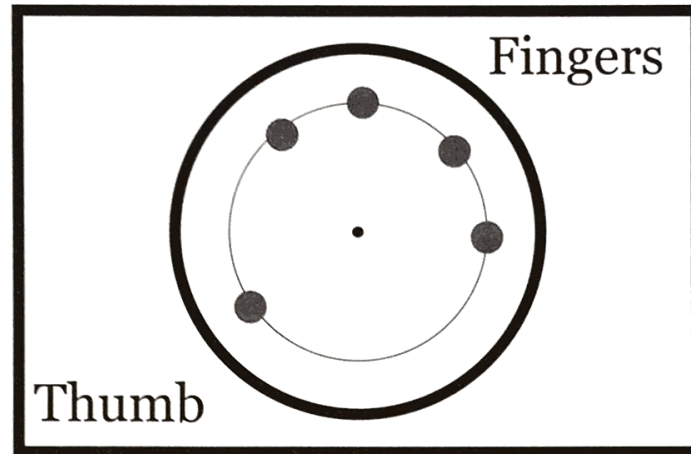
So what's the point in learning?

Well if the plate is not spinning it will be very wobbly and you can't do any tricks.

(good enough for a photo though!)

-spin equals stability-

\*Using your free hand, spread your fingers wide and place them in the 'dip' of the plate from above, try not to disturb the balance of the plate too much, aim to keep the plate in a horizontal position.

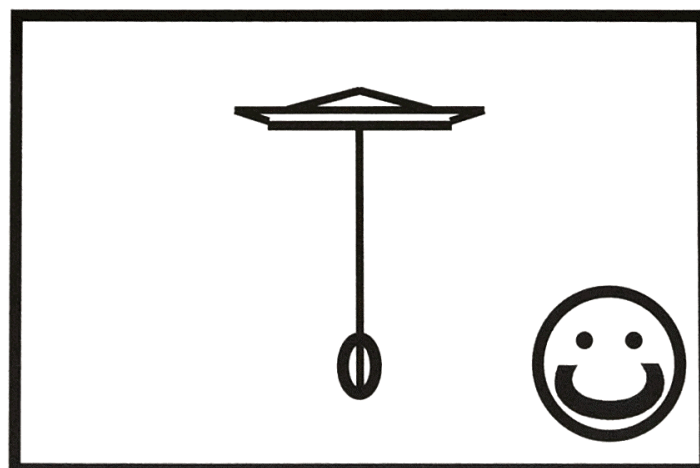


Finger positions.  
Viewed from  
Above.

\*Give a gentle flick of the wrist, either clockwise or anticlockwise, whichever is most comfortable, and release, to leave the plate spinning on the stick.

\*Don't try to spin the plate too fast to start with... Begin slowly and build up speed with practice.

\*Once the plate is spinning you can change your hold on the stick to wherever is comfortable... Holding the stick at the bottom will look most impressive, while no more difficult!



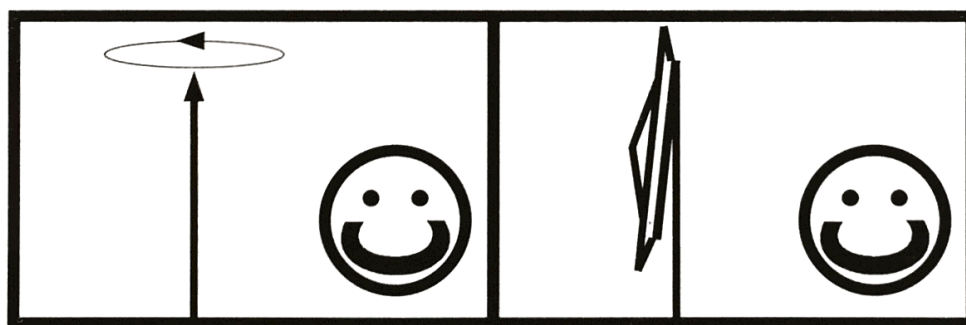
# The Trickier Way

This is the way to spin a plate that people usually expect to see, although tricky to get going at first, once you have managed it two or three times, you will find it works almost every time after. This method gives a good steady fast spin.

\*Use 'Only the Stick' at first to become familiar with the action required without dropping the plate all the time.

\*Hold the stick at the bottom with a relaxed grip and point your index finger along the stick toward the pointy end. Point the stick toward the ceiling with your hand at about eye level.

\*Watch the top of the stick, then using your 'WRIST ONLY' make circles with the top of the stick about the same size as the circular rim on the bottom of plate.

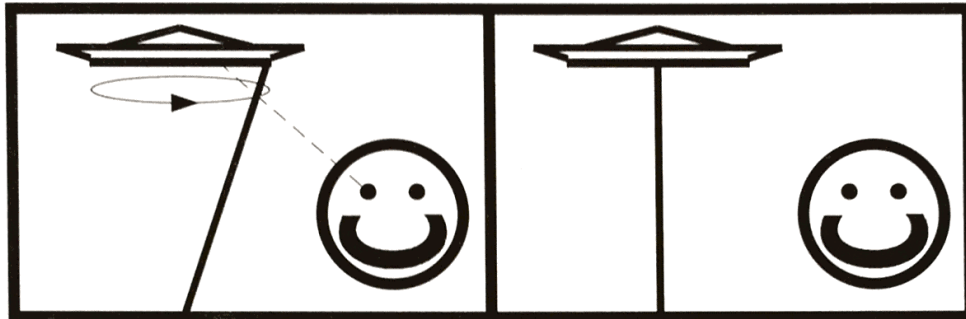


\*Once you feel comfortable making smooth even circles at a constant speed and height (don't move your hand or arm up and down), get your spinning plate and hang it on top of the stick by the rim.

\*As before but with the plate hanging, point the stick toward the ceiling with your hand at about eye level, watch the top

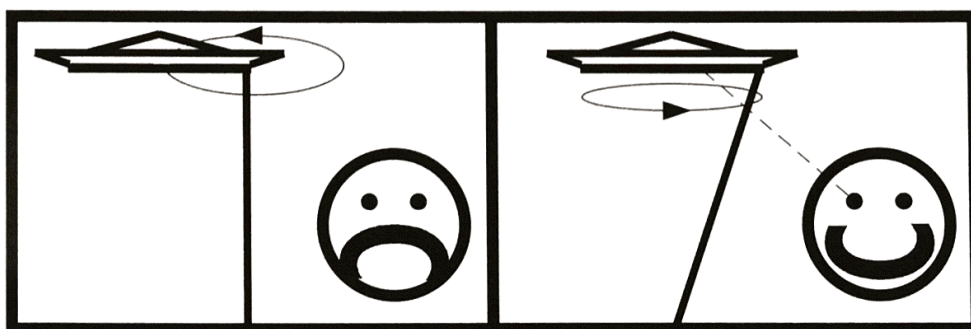
of the stick and make smooth, steady, even circles, using your 'WRIST ONLY', with the top of the stick.

\*The plate should begin to move steadily around the stick, gradually build up speed, and if done smoothly and evenly with the correct rhythm the plate should sit up to a horizontal position.



\*At this point you should be able to see the 'centre below' point of the plate. If you can see it, stop moving the stick and it should find the centre of the plate by itself. If you can't see it, change your spinning rhythm until you can.

\*Don't stiffen up or try to force it or the plate will swing around while the stick remains still, instead of the plate staying in one place (although spinning), while the stick spins around the rim.



\*As long as the plate doesn't keep jumping off the stick, this method is all about the correct rhythm, play with it until it sits up and you can see the centre point of the plate.

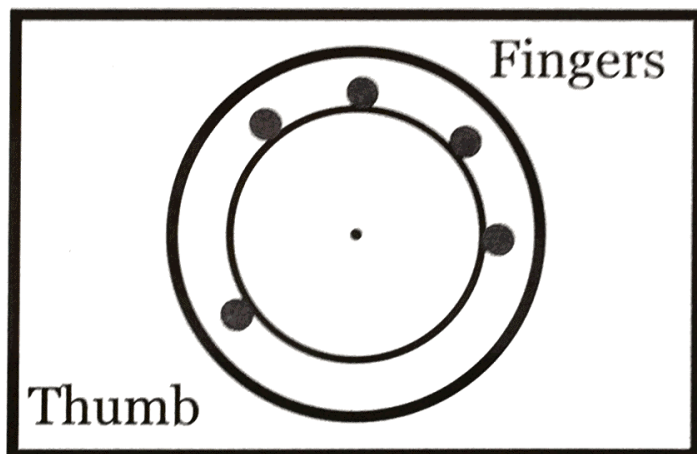


# The Flash Way

This method begins with a spinning throw of the plate, then a catch on the stick, so can be a bit tricky. You should get a good fast spin although often a bit wobbly due to the catch, so practice practice practice!

\*To begin with, work on the throw only and catch the plate in your hands.

\*Hold the spinning plate by the rim in one hand, spread your finger tips as evenly as you comfortably can around the rim. Hold the plate in a horizontal position at about eye level.



Finger positions.  
Viewed from  
Below.

\*With a flick of the wrist, to the right if your right handed, the left if left, throw the plate upwards with a horizontal spin, then catch it in your hands.

\*Initially focus on making the plate spin. As your spin improves focus on keeping the plate horizontal. As this improves focus on making the throw straight up and down. The greater distance the plate travels the trickier the catch.

\*Now you should be ready to pick up the stick in your free hand! Hold it at the bottom, then give the plate a good spinning throw and catch it on the stick.

# What's Up With That?

“The plate keeps falling off the stick!”

-If it's doing this using 'The Easy Way', you are probably trying to spin it too fast, build up from slow to fast, but always steady. If it's doing this during 'The Trickier Way', your arm, therefore stick and plate will be moving up and down somehow. Use your free hand to hold your spinning arm steady just below your wrist.

“I can't get the stick to the middle of the plate!”

-Can you see the centre of the plate from below in approximately one fixed place, or is it moving about too fast? If you can see it fixed, then you may need a little more speed of spin. If it is moving, change your rhythm until the centre is steady, then just stop moving the stick and it will find the centre of the plate by itself.

“I can't see the centre point of the plate!”

-Relax, most things work best when you relax a little. If you are trying too hard, generally the stick will be rigidly still, while the plate swings around it, the plate centre will be moving around too much. You must change the spin rhythm until the stick moves and the plate remains steady, then you will see the centre point!

“My hand aches, and I still can't do it!”

-Relax... Most things work best when you relax a little!

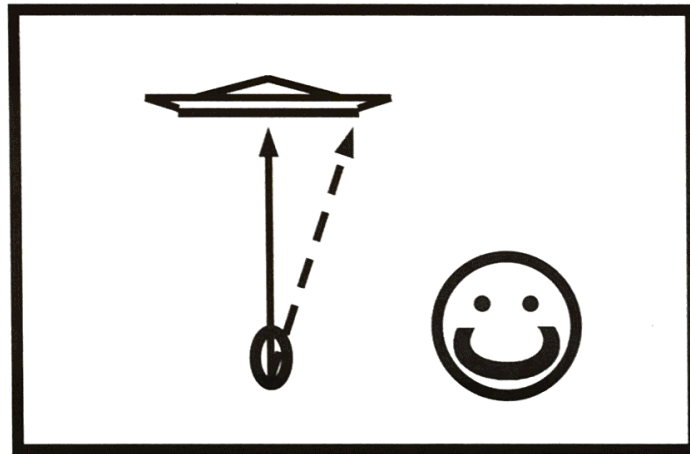
“The plate moves away from me while I try to spin it!”

-Try to keep your hand at eye level and straight, from your elbow to the top of the plate stick.

# Now You Can Spin A Plate

Now you can spin a plate, what next? Well none of the methods you have learnt will keep the plate spinning for too long, so next you need to learn to speed the plate up. This will use 'The Trickier Way', with a little jump for the spinning plate.

While the plate is spinning give it a little jump and when the plate is just off the stick a little, shift the stick out to the rim of the spinning plate and pick up the spinning rhythm, speed it up a little, then stop moving the stick to centre it.



It is a good idea to keep your plate and stick handy, you never know when you may have 10 minutes to spare and its amazing how distracting plate spinning can be leaving you refreshed to return to... well whatever!

Teach your friends... it is surprising what you learn when you teach someone else. You will also then have 2 extra arms to do tricks with and 1 extra brain to come up with other ideas!

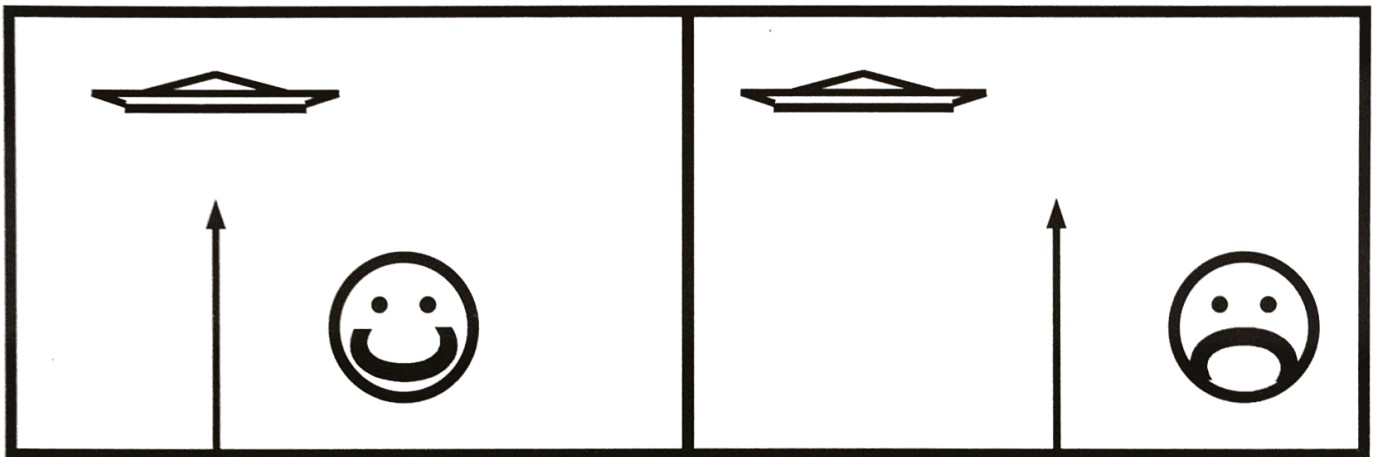
**-How About Learning Some Tricks!-**

# Tricks

The faster the plate spins the steadier it is, so try the trickiest tricks when the plate is at its fastest, you may need to speed the plate up between tricks!

## Throw and Catch

When you have the plate spinning, move the stick down a little, then push it up quickly... the plate should keep moving up when the stick stops.

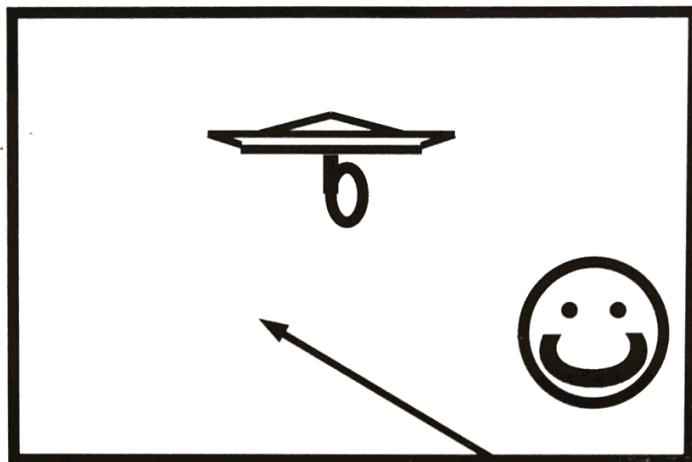


As long as you get the stick under the plate, it should centre itself when you make the catch. Try to make the throws up and down, not across too much. Up and down makes for an easy catch and while the plate can be thrown sideways, the greater distance it travels the trickier the catch... see how you find it and don't be scared of drops!

## Finger Spin

This should really be called the 'Fingernail Spin'. When you have the plate spinning, slide your index finger along the stick to the point it meets the plate (centre below), then take the stick down and away, leaving the plate hopefully

spinning on your fingernail.



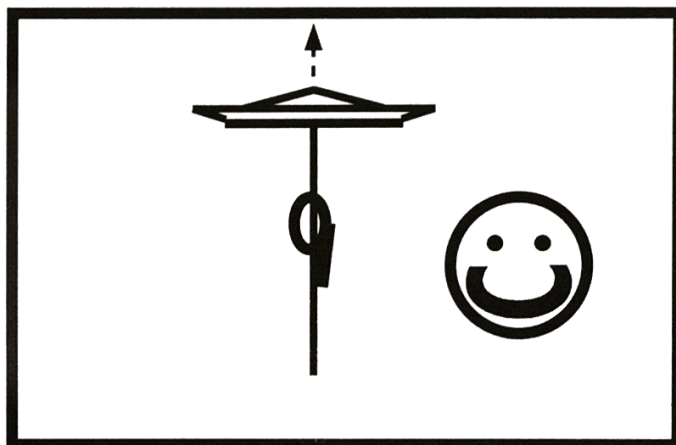
Because fingers are bigger than plate sticks friction will occur, making the plate slow down quite quickly, best results will be achieved when the plate is on your fingernail.

Once you have the plate spinning on your finger, how about throwing or placing it back on the plate stick.

You don't have to use your index finger for this trick, although it is the easiest finger to use when you first learn, as you improve try passing the plate from finger to finger.

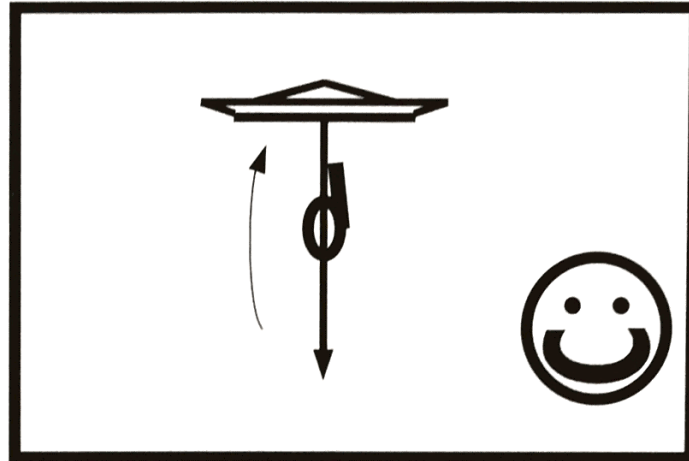
### **The Wrong End Of The Stick**

When you have the plate spinning, change your hand hold on the stick to a thumbs down grip in the middle of the stick.



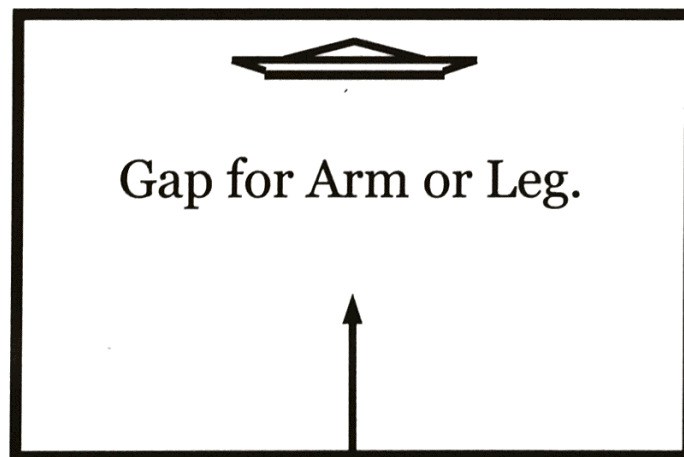
Throw the plate up, then turn your hand and stick to a

thumbs up position to catch the plate.



### Under The Arm/ Leg

When you have the plate spinning, move it to under your free arm, then give the plate a good throw up, move your arm through the gap between the plate and the stick and then catch the plate on the stick again.



This can also be done under your leg but will require reasonable balance, don't rush, you may find it helpful to practice balancing on one leg first.

### The Finish

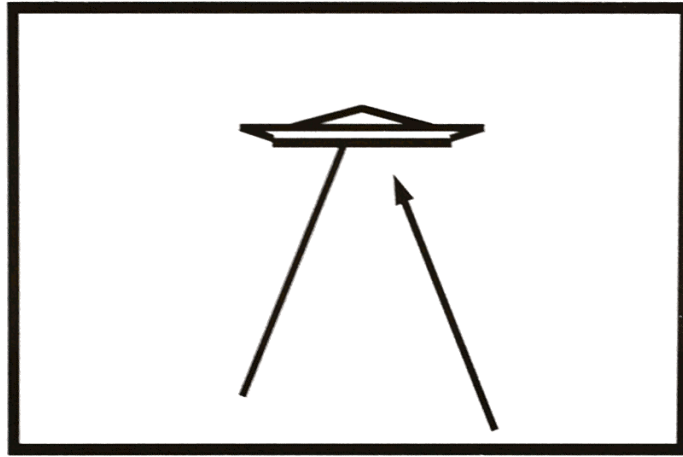
Give the plate a good high throw and instead of catching it on your stick or you finger, catch it in one or both of your hands. All that is left then is to take a bow! Hooray, Hooray!

# What Next

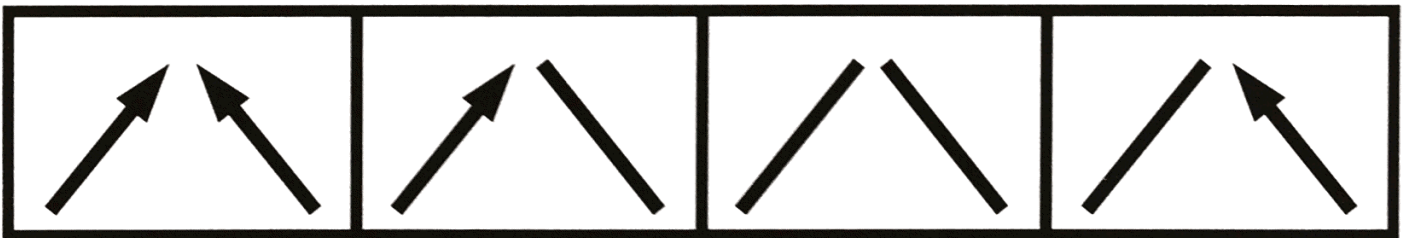
A few ideas you can try with a little more...

## More Than One Stick

You could pass the plate from one stick to the other. You could try passing it under your leg, behind your back, over your shoulders, or even to someone else, the possibilities are endless, see what you can come up with!



How about using either end of each stick, making 4 variations, pass the plate, turn the stick, pass the plate, turn the stick, e.t.c.



**-REMEMBER-**

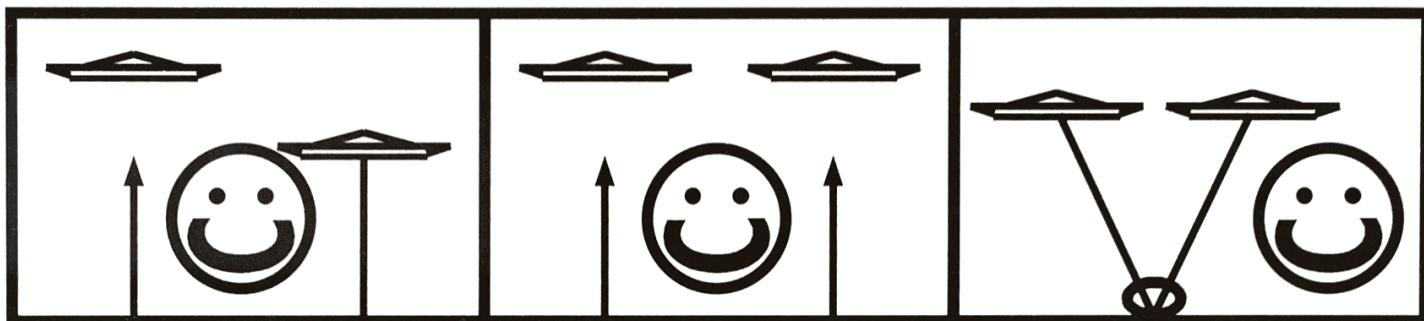
All the different ways you can pass the plate can also be done with a throw.

Hopefully you have 10 fingers', use them!  
Ok, ok, hopefully 8 fingers and 2 thumbs!

## More Than One Plate

How about learning to spin the plate with your other hand? You could then try to spin one plate, then the other, or two plates at one time. Otherwise using one hand to spin the plates, get one plate going, place it on the stick in the other hand, then get the second plate spinning.

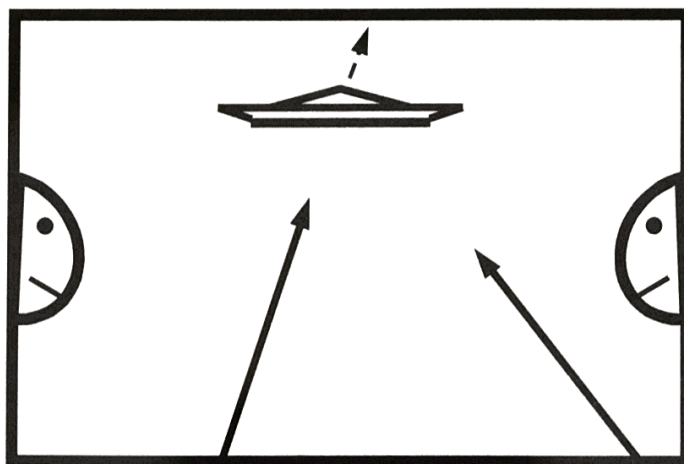
With both plates spinning, you could try throwing one, then the other, or throwing both at the same time, how about placing both sticks in one hand.



Basically the more plates and sticks you have, the more possibilities.

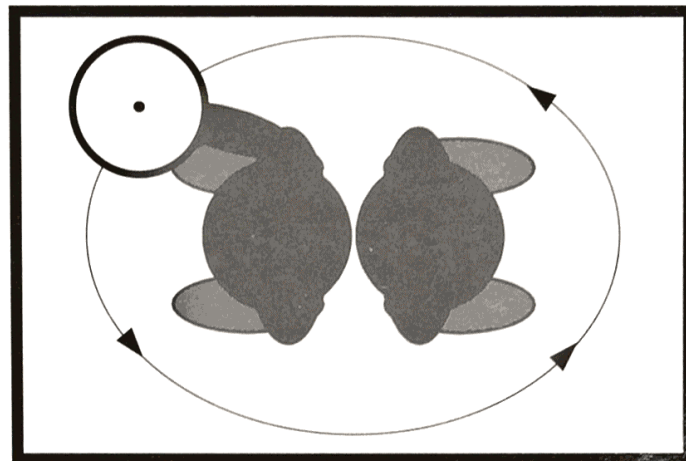
## More Than One Person

You could throw the plate from person to person, make sure the throws don't travel too far sideways, otherwise it gets tricky to catch.





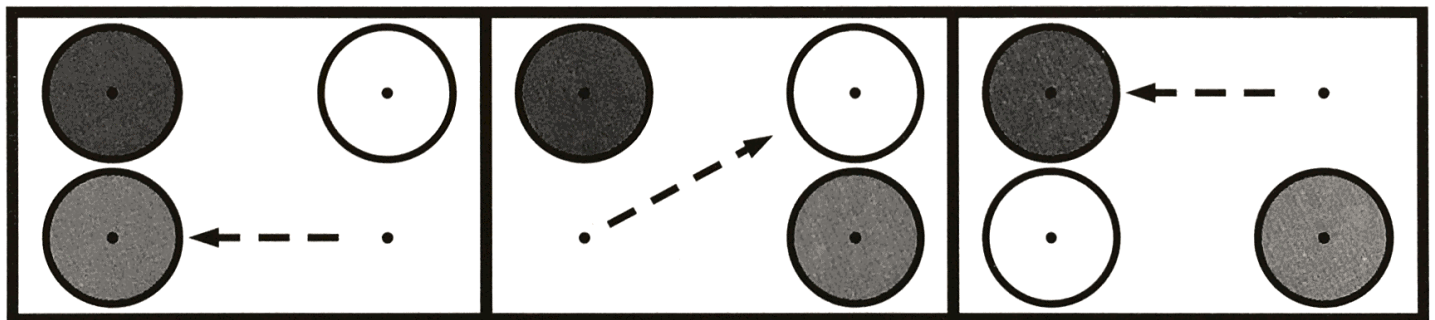
How about standing back to back with someone and passing the plate and stick from hand to hand around you both!



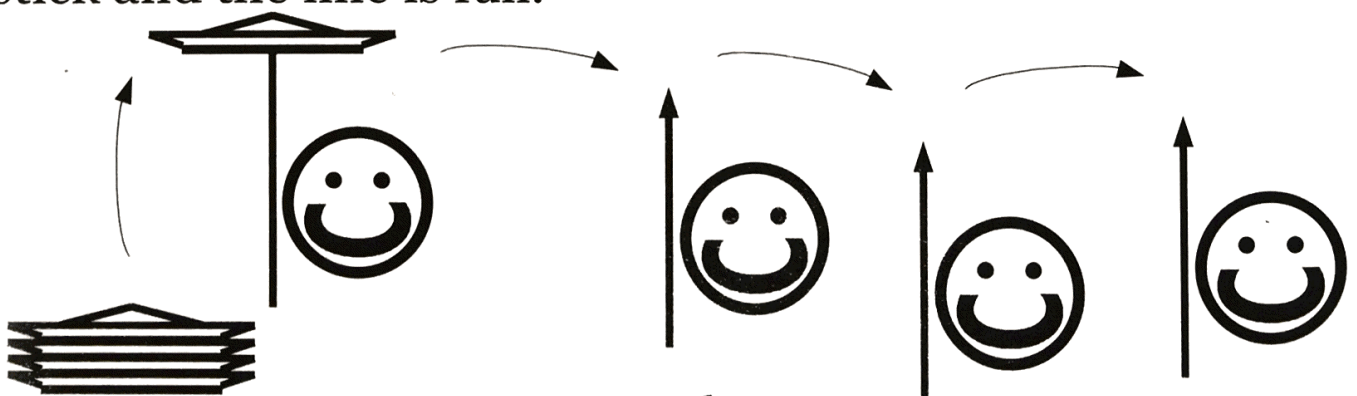
Viewed From Above.

With 2 people, each has 2 sticks, 1 in each hand, 1 person has 2 plates spinning, the other only 1 plate and 1 empty stick.

The empty stick takes a plate from the other person, the new stick with no plate takes the other plate from the other person (not the same plate back again!), repeat this making all the plates eventually visit all the sticks.



Line everyone up with a plate stick for each person, one person spins all the plates, one at a time, then passes each plate along the line, until each person has a plate on their stick and the line is full.





I hope you have enjoyed this booklet,  
and continue to enjoy  
'Plate Spinning'.

Plate Spinning is a skill for life,  
something you never really forget,  
you don't need to do it every day, but  
whenever you find the time or  
inclination... I'm sure you will have  
fun!

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