

What does it take to become a Trapeze Artist?

Think you have what it takes to be an acrobat or trapeze artist? To find out some of the ins and outs of becoming a circus performer, we spoke with Pauliina Rasanen, a trapeze artist with Cirque du Soleil.



1 What does a day at work look like?

I perform at night, so I like to sleep in. In the morning I practise on stage for 45 minutes. I perform my trapeze act once or twice a day, nine or 10 times every week. Before each show, I put on my make-up and sparkly costume, and warm up for half an hour, doing handstands and abdominal push-ups. I have to do a lot of strength and flexibility exercises. After the show, I practise again for at least another half an hour. That's when my muscles are warmest, so I can push my body even harder.

2 Why do you love your job?

It's like dreaming of flying. When you do a great performance on the trapeze and everything goes well, it's such an incredible feeling – and you try to project that feeling to the audience. So it's a physical challenge, but it's also an art. You're expressing yourself through the way you move.

3 What's tough about it?

Working at such a high level every day. Sometimes you wake up with a pain in your tummy, but you still have to perform. I have cramps in my hands from holding on to the trapeze bar, but that doesn't bother me as much as my sore muscles. I like to have a massage once a week.

4 What skills do you need to be a trapeze artist?

You've got to be talented, but also have the strength to cope with the intense physical training. Physically, you need to keep a light body weight, so if you're performing with a partner, they can catch you easily. You can't be at all nervous – when there are 5,000 people watching you, you need to keep your cool. And you've got to be adaptable, because we change cities about once every six weeks.

5 What would you say to someone who wanted to become a trapeze artist?

I'd say first of all that it's not magic – it's work. You have to work extremely hard, but if you have the physical capacity and talent, you should follow your dreams. I'm originally from Finland, where I did gymnastics and ballet as a child, before joining a youth circus at 14. Then I moved to Canada to study at the National Circus School of Montreal for three years. Cirque du Soleil saw my final performance at circus school, but they also recruit acrobats from gymnastic competitions.

6 What's the salary and career path like?

We get paid per show, and the amount depends on how you've negotiated your contract. I've only met two trapeze artists in their late thirties or early forties. There aren't many older than 30 so you need to think ahead. If you've done a range of theatrical, dance and acrobatic training, it'll be easier to try a different direction in your career. You could choreograph your own show, or teach. I plan to set up my own act in Finland with my boyfriend, a Russian acrobat.

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- 1p 17 Wat vertelt alinea 1 over trapezeartiest Pauliina Rasanen?
A Ze oefent ook na een optreden.
B Ze slaapt vaak vlak voor een optreden.
C Ze treedt meestal maar kort op.
- 1p 18 Wat vindt Pauliina leuk aan haar werk? (alinea 2)
A het applaus van het publiek
B het gevoel dat ze heeft tijdens een optreden
C het uiterste van haar lichaam vragen
- 1p 19 Wat vindt Pauliina het **minst** leuk aan haar werk? (alinea 3)
A dat haar handen soms zeer doen
B dat ze dagelijks moet optreden
C dat ze vaak spierpijn heeft
- 2p 20 Om trapezeartiest te kunnen zijn, heb je bepaalde eigenschappen en vaardigheden nodig.
→ Welke noemt Pauliina in alinea 4?
Omcirkel 'wel' of 'niet' in je uitwerkbijlage.
1 zwaar kunnen trainen
2 goed kunnen samenwerken met collega's
3 rustig kunnen blijven in spannende situaties
4 je makkelijk aan kunnen passen
- 1p 21 Welk advies geeft Pauliina aan mensen die trapezeartiest willen worden? (alinea 5)
A Ga ervoor als je denkt dat je het kunt.
B Gun jezelf de tijd om het vak goed te leren.
C Zorg dat je de juiste opleiding doet.
- 1p 22 Wat blijkt uit alinea 6 over het werk van trapezeartiest?
A Je krijgt er over het algemeen goed voor betaald.
B Je moet al vroeg nadenken over wat je erna gaat doen.
C Je zult je hele leven aan je techniek moeten blijven werken.