

FOUNDATIONS OF FLIGHT | VERTICAL FORMATION SKYDIVING BLOCK 4



Brought to you by AXIS Flight School Instructor Niklas Daniel at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. Photos by Brandon Atwood.

Move Description

4-way VFS Block 4 (chain gang—chain gang) requires two flyers to face each other flying in a head-up position and two flyers to face each other flying in a head-down position. The head-down flyers then take grips on the legs of the head-up flyers. The head-down flyers can grip the head-up flyers on any part of the leg (excluding the leg strap and above).

During the inter, the head-down flyers release their grips and all members of the team transition to the opposite orientation. (The head-down flyers transition to head-up and vice versa.) The competitors can achieve this transition in any way they choose: backflip, frontflip, cartwheel, etc. The block is complete when the jumpers who have transitioned to the head-down position pick up the leg grips of the jumpers who are now head up.

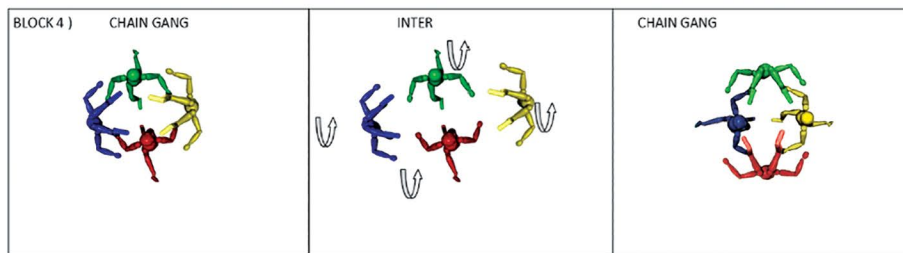
For judging, it is the team's responsibility to clearly present the correct formations and inter to the videographer, as well as to show complete separation between points. The formations do not need to be perfectly symmetrical, but the team must perform them in a controlled manner and close them with stationary contact. (For more information, refer to Chapter 5 of the USPA Skydiver's Competition Manual.)

Execution

One of the most efficient of the many ways to perform this maneuver is for the head-down flyers to frontflip and the head-up flyers to backflip during the transition. Each flyer's goal is to form a star picture with his cross-partner (clone) at the start and the finish. To accomplish this, the jumpers must maintain communication with their clones by using eye contact and cross-referencing.

Head-Down Flyers

Jumpers tend to drift away from the center of the formation because they are afraid of getting kicked during the inter. To counter this, the head-down flyers should each make a 180-degree turn while still



on their heads before transitioning to the head-up position with a frontflip (effectively outfacing for a brief moment while looking over their shoulders). This will allow their legs to fall into the center of the formation and avoid unnecessary leg traffic. In addition, this will make it easier for the other jumpers to pick up grips, as the transitioning head-down flyers' legs will come at them from the same direction. The flyers should avoid transitioning before turning, as it will force them to bring their legs into the center from the side. Since the jumpers are flying in opposite orientations, it can be difficult to maintain proper levels. The head-down flyers can help minimize this by slowing their fall rates slightly while transitioning.

Head-Up Flyers

Once the head-down flyers have released their grips, the head-up flyers should turn 90 degrees from the center and then perform a backflip (see "Foundations of Flight—Sit to Head-Down Backflip," September 2012 *Parachutist*) while looking over their shoulders to visually cross-reference the center and their clones. As the head-up



Clone positions in chain gang

jumpers transition, they should square off with their clones in a star picture as they come to rest on their heads. They can then grip the legs of the now-head-up flyers.

Helpful Hints

Teams new to this maneuver can break down the block by staging the inter. The head-down flyers transition first and the team builds a 4-way unlinked sit-star. After the team matches levels and proximity, the original head-up flyers finish the block by transitioning to head-down and picking up leg grips.



To view the instructional video, use the QR code to the left or visit the Foundations of Flight page at parachutistonline.com.