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The question of rigging aerial points at home comes up often. This article is excerpted from the book *Introduction to Rigging: Essentials for Aerialists*

So you want an aerial point at home?

This question comes up every day in circus schools across the country. Distance to the school, availability of training time and the cost of training time in an established studio are all commonly cited reasons for wanting to install a point at home. Are you ready to have a point at home? Let's look at some of the many factors that you need to consider when looking installing a point at home or purchasing a freestanding aerial rig.

Issue 1: Are you ready to work without supervision?

Signs that you're **not** ready to train without supervision include:

- If you or your child is in a beginner's class, you are not ready to have a point at home.
- If you or your child's teacher hovers over you/them when doing different skills, you are not ready to have a point at home.
- If you ask the teacher about independent practice (open hang time) and they say no (or only with so and so or myself), you are not ready to have a point at home.
- If you or your child needs a lot of teacher motivation to work effectively, you are not ready to have a point at home.
- If the teacher or staff seems to nag you or your child about what the teacher sees as safety issues, you are not ready to have a point at home.

Signs that you may be ready to train without supervision include:

- You or your child is in the high intermediate or advanced classes.
- You or your child are regulars at the independent practices (open hang times) AND do not require help during these periods.
- You or your child is regularly asked to assist with other students or to demonstrate proper technique.

Issue 2: Do you have the space for an aerial point in your house?

Some of the space issues that you need to look at when thinking about installing a point at your house include:

- The minimum height you need for a point used for fabrics is 16 feet. The minimum space you need for most other static aerials is 14 feet.
- Do you have at least 6 unobstructed feet in every direction from where you want your point?
- Where are you going to store the crash mat? Plan on a space capable of storing a 5'x10'x1'

Issue 3: Building Structure

Does your home have the strength for an aerial point? Aerial arts can generate high shock loads, even on relatively small skills. You also need to think about protecting the rest of your house from the forces involved. When installing an aerial point, you want to use the following specifications:

Aerial points should be rated for a 2,000lbs WLL @ 4:1 DF for a single point, exclusive of other loads in the support path

It is not acceptable to count this as part of the existing live load, nor is it acceptable to use snow load capacity for it.

In any home built using 2x4 construction, this generally means a major construction project. Plan at LEAST \$15,000 to get the point up and running in the typical modern 2x4 construction residence.

Issue 4: Zoning

In many areas, the addition of an aerial point may have zoning implications. In many areas, any aerial point is considered to be a commercial usage of the property. Other zoning issues with aerial points can also arise. Before spending the kind of money involved in properly constructing an aerial point you should check with your local zoning board to make sure this is an acceptable use of the property.

Issue 5: Insurance

Having an aerial point in your house adds a LOT of insurance implications. Make sure you are prepared and ready for them.

- Homeowners insurance typically does NOT cover aerial arts. As a rule of thumb, if your policy prohibits trampolines (and most do), they will not cover aerial arts.
- In many places, your homeowners insurance can be CANCELED for having an aerial point. Homeowners need to be aware that this can cause a mortgage to go into default.
- If you rent, having an aerial point can cause a property owners insurance policy to be CANCELED. This can lead to eviction and other legal action from the property owner.
- If you have renters insurance, having an aerial point can cause your renters insurance to be CANCELED.

Some things you can do to help deal with the insurance issues include:

- Adding the aerial point to your home policy. Some homeowners' insurance companies will allow you to add an aerial point to your homeowners' policy. This will often add \$500 - \$1000 a year to your policy, but be aware that they generally limit it to being used by the residents of the house ONLY.
- Getting a separate liability policy for it. If you have a policy that specifically covers your aerial point, you can then notify your homeowners' insurance of this, and they can exclude it from that policy.

Issue 6: Liability

For most people, the liability of an aerial point for the residents of a dwelling is fairly manageable. However you need to think through the liability issues of non-residents using a home aerial point. Some questions to think about include:

- If a guest gets hurt, who is going to pay for the injury?
- What if your guest doesn't have medical insurance and gets hurt?
- What if your guest loses work because of an injury sustained on your home rig?
- What if your rigging fails while being used by a guest?
- What if your rigging point is used by an uninvited guest?

Issue 7: Renting or Teaching on a home point

Teaching or taking any form of compensation for the use of a home aerial point adds complexity to the situation. Issues to consider include:

- How does this affect your zoning? In most locations this then becomes a business venture.
- How does this affect your insurance? No homeowner's policy will cover this as a business.
- Do you have insurance for TEACHING aerial arts?
- How does this affect your liability in regards to the point? (generally, you are a lot more liable)

Issue 8: Freestanding Aerial Rigs

Freestanding aerial rigs present issues all their own. Some things to consider:

- Where on your property will it go? Make sure you have a flat, level area large enough to accommodate your rig.
- Do your local zoning laws allow you to have this kind of structure/use on the property?
- Is there adequate access control? An aerial rig may be considered an "attractive nuisance" along the same lines as a pool or trampoline. State or local laws may require you to secure access to your rig when unattended (e.g. 6 foot tall fence with a locked gate).
- Will you leave the rig up for periods of time, or take it down after each use?
- How will you handle storms with the rig up? Lightning control?
- Where will you store the rig when not in use?
- What is your insurance situation, both at home and if you set up the rig other places?

Issue 9: Ensuring Safety

If you have gotten through all of the above, the last and arguably most important issue you will need to deal with is ensuring safety of the aerialists that use this point.

- How do you make sure that a resident of your home isn't going to get hurt and suffer for hours before they are found?
- How will you deal with use issues that inevitably come up?
- How are you going to deal with the ongoing maintenance of an aerial point?
- Who is qualified to do the needed inspections and repairs?

Conclusions

The choice to install a home aerial point is not one to be taken lightly. There are many issues involved with home aerial rigs that need to be dealt with as part of this process. The issues outlined here are all solvable with enough time, money and work. Can you put in the time, money and work needed to do it right? Is it a worthwhile investment for you and your family? No one can answer this for you, only you will be able to figure out the answer to these questions based on your unique situation.