

# THE 3 LATE DROP TECHNIQUES

**T**oday's women's gymnastics is seeing more in-bar circling skills performed than in years past. There are a few reasons for this but suffice it to say in-bar skills are not just a trend — they are the new way to swing bars, and they are not going away any time soon.

Of all the backward swinging in-bar skills, which includes the clear hip handstand, toe shoot handstand, staldler handstand and inside (piked) staldler handstand, the toe shoot handstand is the most important. The technique you will use to create the best possible toe shoot handstand will help you teach the staldler and inside staldler later.

History has proven that whatever skills begin to trend at the Olympic level of our sport eventually become more common in our Junior Olympic levels.

This is certainly going to be the case with in-bar skills. The primary reason is that in-bar skills, performed correctly, can provide a better method for accomplishing more difficult skills, and the in-bar skills are not as difficult as you might imagine.

## ROUTINES ARE CHANGING

There were eight routines performed in the 2012 Olympic uneven bar finals. Of these eight routines, there were eight skills performed in the piked staldler position. At the 2014 World Championships finals, there were 14 skills performed using the piked staldler position. This means that every gymnast used this skill, but twice. It has become the skill of choice for elite gymnasts at the world level.

My personal opinion is that in-bar

skills have changed uneven bars much like the Yurchenko vault changed vaulting forever. Why? In-bar circling skills allow weaker gymnasts to perform more difficult skills and stronger gymnasts to perform difficult skills even better. In-bar circling skills provide a method for performing advanced skills with turns or flight more consistently and safely.

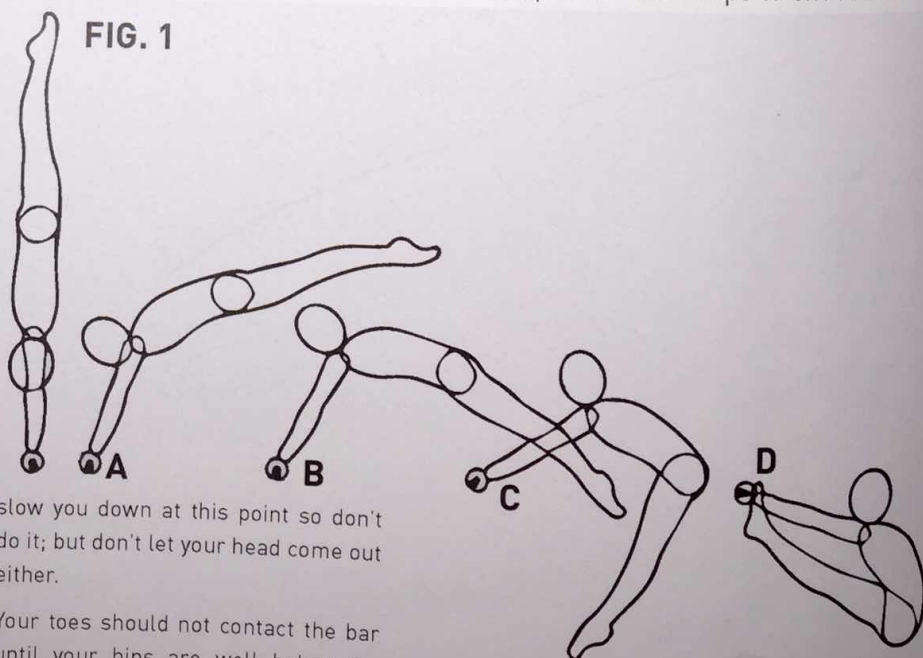
## YOU HAVE CHOICES

To teach these in-bar skills correctly, you must teach the late drop. The term "late drop" is what coaches use to describe the correct technique of falling from the handstand to get in to the position of the in-bar skill. The later the gymnast gets in to the position, the more swing she will have. Much like you have choices of which in-bar skills to teach, you also have three techniques of late drops to choose from.

## The Hollow Drop

Of the three late drop techniques, the Hollow Drop is the most traditional. Below is a description of the technique at each key position of the late drop in Fig. 1.

- A** Begin by pushing your shoulders backward, but only far enough that you do not go too fast. Too much speed will not allow time to get your toes on the bar.
- B** As you begin to increase your hollow position, you begin to bring your toes toward the bar. Press your chin back as if you have a double chin.
- C** As your toes come toward the bar, you continue to push the bar forward so that your hips are moving backward away from the bar, increasing your speed. Continue to press the double chin position. Burying your head will



slow you down at this point so don't do it; but don't let your head come out either.

- D** Your toes should not contact the bar until your hips are well below the bar. The later your toes make contact the more speed you can create. The

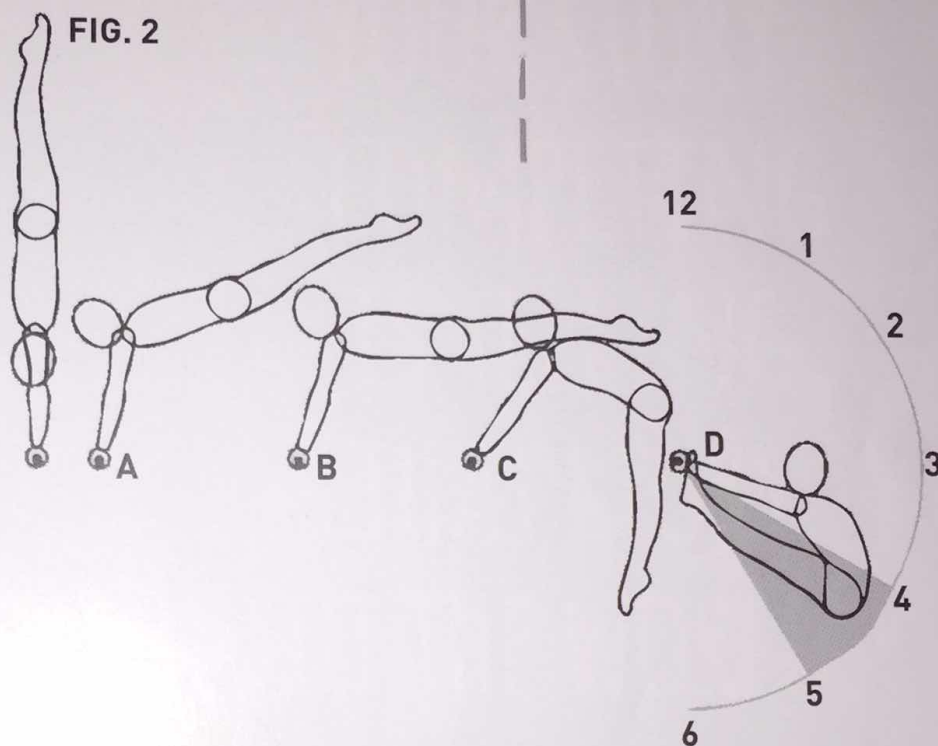
earlier your toes touch the bar, the more friction you create, which slows you down.

# TECHNIQUES FOR IN-BAR SKILLS

## The Straight Lever Drop

The Straight Lever Drop technique uses a wind-up action to build speed. This technique can create more speed than the Hollow Drop.

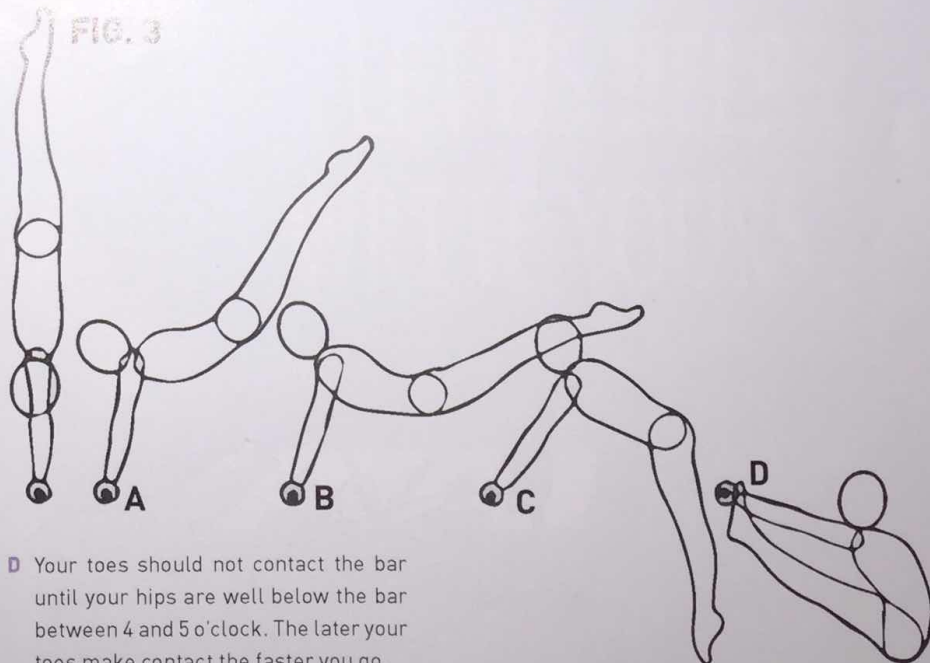
- A** Allow your shoulders to fall slightly backward as you begin to drop your body while maintaining a straight body position. The only angle here is in your shoulders.
- B** Fall to a horizontal position before you begin your pike. This is where your speed really begins to accelerate.
- C** The real power in this technique comes at this point: pushing your shoulders and hips backward quickly as your toes come toward the bar. The two counter movements create tremendous speed.
- D** Your toes should not contact the bar until your hips are well below the bar between 4 and 5 o'clock. The later your toes make contact the faster you go. However, get them on too late and you peel off, so be careful.



## The Arch Lever Drop

The Arch Lever Drop technique takes the wind up action to its maximum potential. Think of this technique like that of a kicker. Whatever you would do with your leg behind you to kick a ball as far as you can is similar to the Arch Lever Drop technique to create maximum speed.

- A** Allow your shoulders to fall slightly backward as you begin to allow your body to fall. Keep your toes high at this point to begin the wind-up.
- B** Fall to a horizontal position, or slightly lower as you advance, before you begin your pike from the arched position.
- C** Push your shoulders and hips backward as hard as you can as your toes come toward the bar. The two counter movements create tremendous speed.



- D** Your toes should not contact the bar until your hips are well below the bar between 4 and 5 o'clock. The later your toes make contact the faster you go.

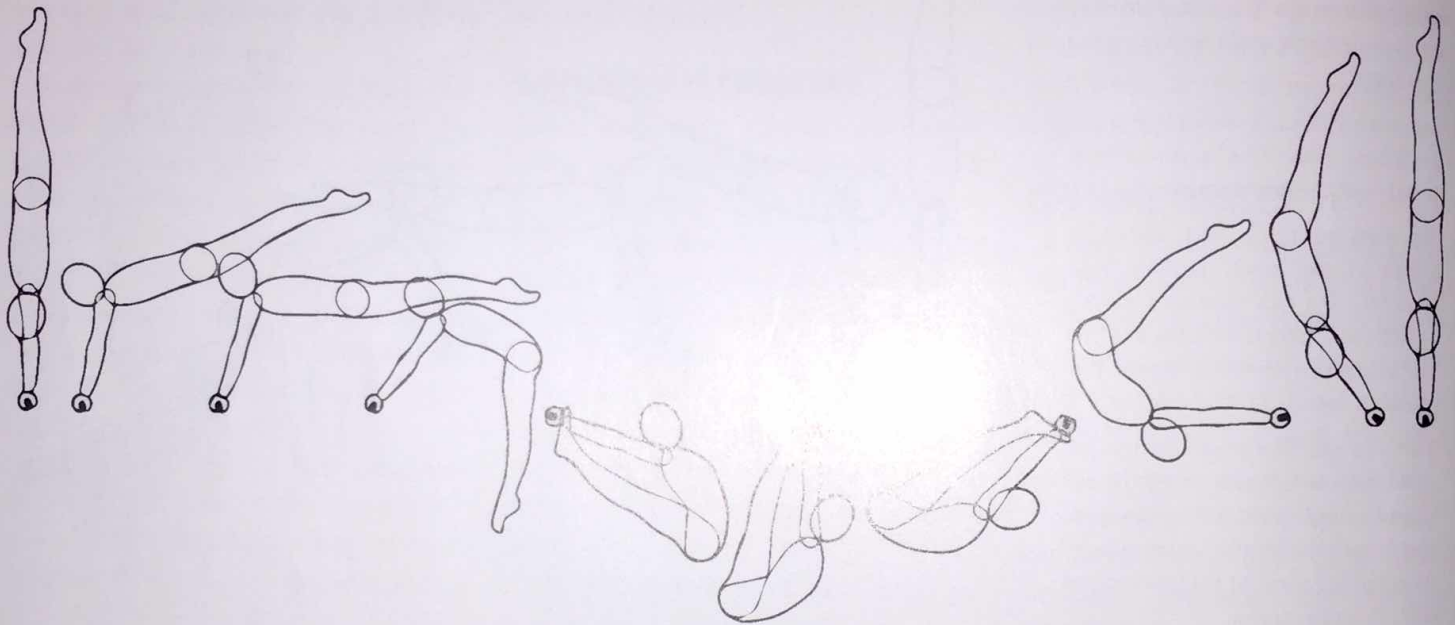


### WHEN TO USE WHICH TECHNIQUE

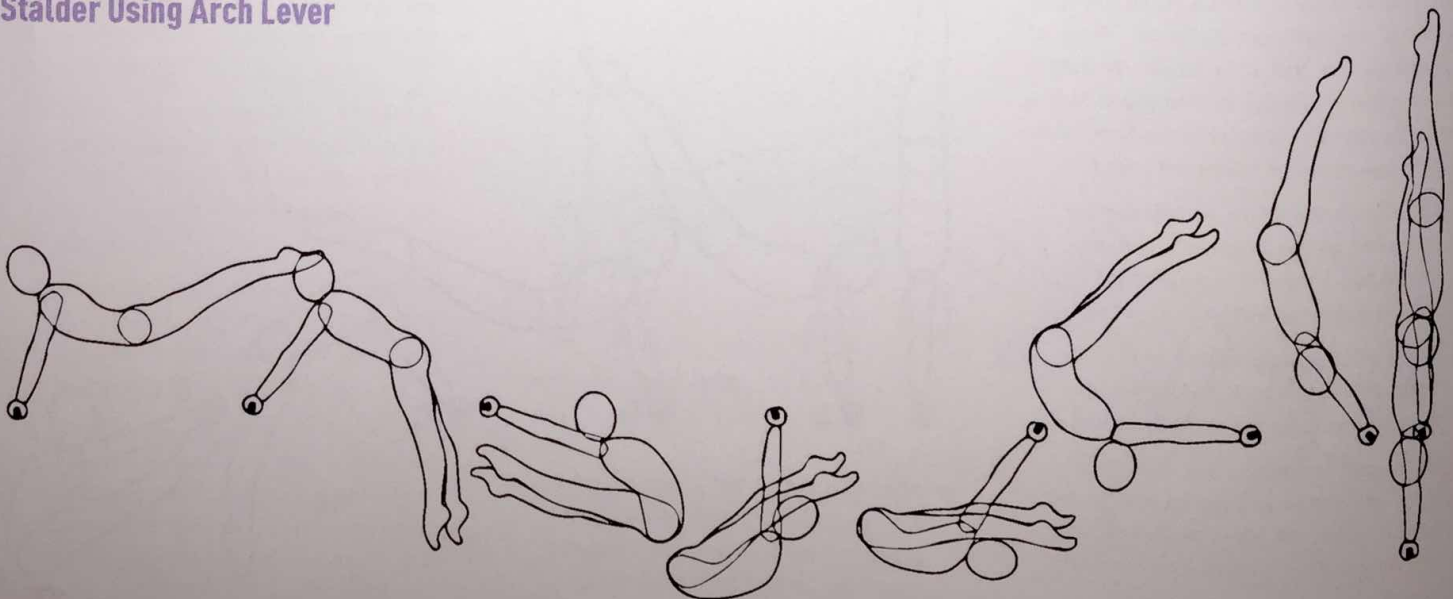
Determining which technique to use for your gymnasts is a bit of an art. There is no one method that will work for every gymnast. Understanding which technique to use will come with experience. First, and most importantly, what will work for one gymnast might not for another. It is the job of the coach to select the best technique for each

individual. Factors that will determine the best technique to use will be the skill you are teaching, the abilities or limitations of the gymnast, their flexibility, their strength and their coordinaton. I have had success starting with the Toe Shoot then moving to the Stalder.

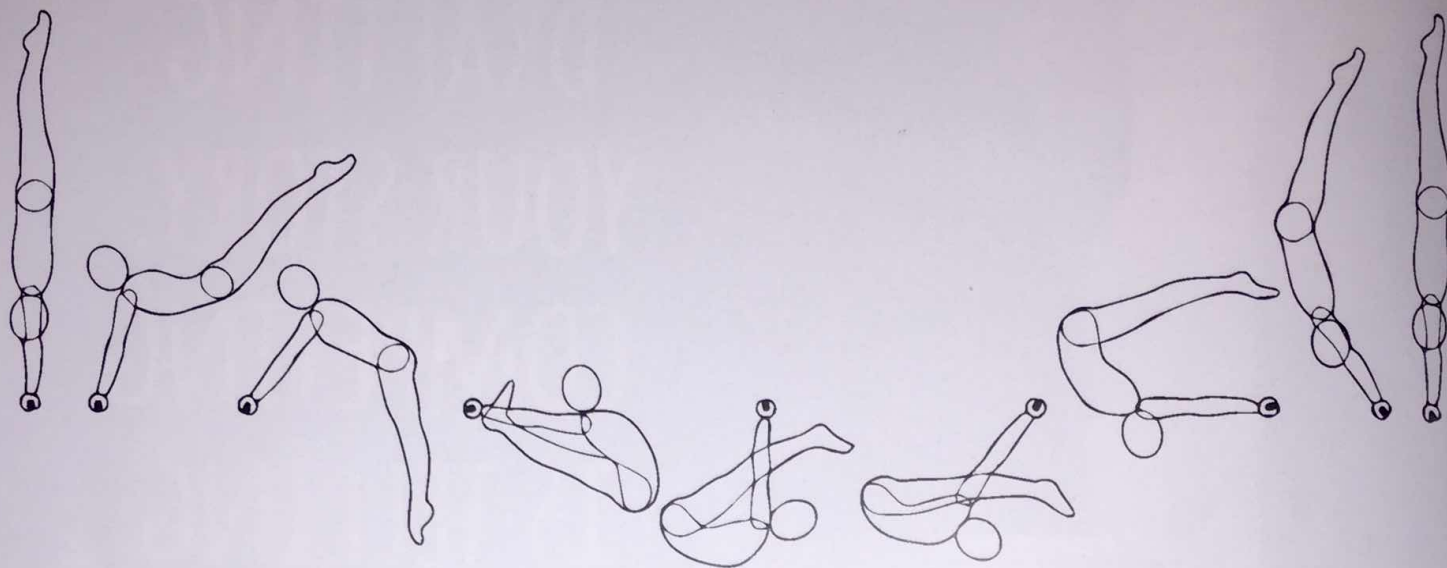
### Toe Shoot using Straight Lever drop



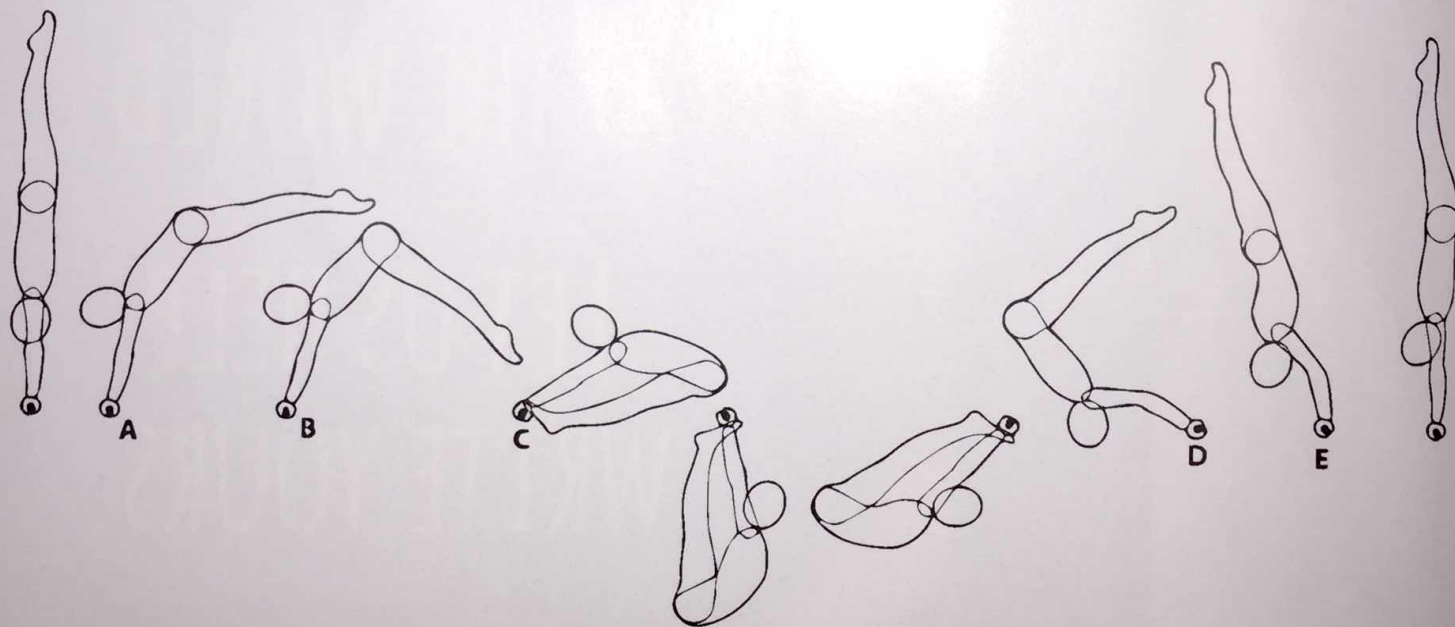
### Stalder Using Arch Lever



## Piked Stalder Using Arch Lever



## The Most Common Errors



- A The gymnast's feet begin descending but her hips (center of gravity) are barely moving.
- B The gymnast's hips are still barely moving as they wait for the feet to get closer to the bar. This drop is too slow.
- C The feet make contact on the bar too soon, well above horizontal, creating more friction that reduces speed.
- D The gymnast bends her arms because she does not have enough speed to keep them straight as she pulls.
- E The gymnast arches her back as she shifts her wrists as the result of not enough speed to remain straight.




## WHERE DID THE CLEAR HIP GO?

One skill that has noticeably disappeared from elite gymnastics is the clear hip handstand. Why would this be when the clear hip is the fundamental in-bar skill we teach younger gymnasts? When elite gymnasts need to perform a full pirouette and finish in a handstand for connection value, or modify a release move for a higher difficulty score, they need consistency. The margin for error for doing the perfect drop-in to a clear hip is the most difficult of all the backward in-bar circling skills. If the gymnast is not in the perfect position to drop in to a clear hip, then the skill becomes inconsistent, or even dangerous when performing flight skills on the high bar. The stalker, however, is the most forgiving. The stalker allows the most room for error in the drop phase to still accomplish the skill. In my experience, after the stalker, the toe

is the next most forgiving, and then the piked stalker.

The quest for the easiest path to the highest difficulty score has revealed that a gymnast can connect skills easier and more consistently from an in-bar skill than from a giant swing. Allow me to make my case. The 2012 Olympic uneven bar champion Aliya Mustafina of Russia performed arguably one of the most difficult routines in the last decade. Aliya did not use a single giant in her gold medal routine. Every major skill she performed was directly connected from an in-bar circling skill preceding it - even her dismount!

Watching the best gymnasts in the world, we see the trend of performing multiple in-bar skills within a routine is growing. In an attempt to compete with the best gymnasts in the world, and to surpass them in the future, it is the direction coaches must go.

These circling skills are not a passing fad. Coaches that are best preparing their athletes for the future are no longer relying on the clear hip or the giant. Though the clear hip is the first backward in-bar circle gymnasts should learn for many reasons, and the giant is still the staple of bars, they are only the beginning. I encourage all coaches to learn the three late drop techniques, understand which technique to apply to which skills, and be aware of your gymnasts abilities or limitations to handle these techniques. 

### TOM FORSTER

Tom has been a member of the USA Gymnastics Women's National Staff since 2008 and the owner of the Colorado Aerials. He is the co-founder of the Uneven Bar Boot Camp, partnering with Neil Resnick, where he and Neil conduct weekend clinics for coaches teaching how to coach the uneven bars. Tom is also the inventor of the Forster Bar. You can contact Tom at [tom@coloradoaerials.com](mailto:tom@coloradoaerials.com). Check out their website at [unevenbarbootcamp.com](http://unevenbarbootcamp.com).

SM

UNITED



*Proud to fly Team USA for 35 years.*

Team USA • friendly

fly the friendly skies