

BUILDING THE SKILLS OF GYMNASTICS

Age: 7 - 9 years (females)

8 - 10 years (males)

Participants with an intellectual disability can enter at any age (with or without support person)

In this stage the focus is on the development of gymnastics skills and overall sport skills. Participants will continue to develop, extend and refine agility, balance, coordination and flexibility. Posture and core strength should be well-established during this stage.

In addition, the gymnast will develop sound basic skills on large apparatus and with hand apparatus, which ensures successful, ongoing and progressive participation in recreational, demonstration or competitive gymnastics. For many participants, their gymnastics training allows an easy transition to another sport or into the Gymnastics for Life stage.

Participants who have the desire to continue in more advanced gymnastics programs will be streamed into the gym discipline that is most suited to their abilities. Proper program placement is the key to successful development and overall personal achievement. All participants should continue participating in one other complementary gym discipline, as well as one or two other sports/activities. Toward the end of this stage, participants will begin to shift from “sampling” a variety of sports to identifying one or two sports (or gym disciplines) that are of special interest.

While competition is not yet the primary goal, participation in formal competitions may start toward the end of this stage. The Canadian system provides opportunities for gymnasts to compete in many levels, from club, to regional, to provincial, national and international. Each level of competition has specific technical requirements and therefore training must match the needs of the competitor.

What qualities will be developed in this stage?

- Match drills with skills and fitness level; ensure proper progressions and physical preparation
- Activities should continue to develop physical capacities (basic strength and flexibility), and refine the ABCs of athleticism (agility, balance, coordination, speed). Body symmetry (strength and flexibility) must be developed.
- A variety of fast-moving, active games should be used to develop power and endurance, as well as linear, lateral and multi-directional speed and correct running technique
- Participants should develop sound basic skills in two of the gym disciplines. Gymnasts who wish to participate in more advanced programs may begin to specialize in only one gym discipline in this stage.
- Gym rules relating to safety and accepted social behaviour need to be reinforced. The gymnast should take ownership in the design and consequences of these regulations.
- Sport ethics are emphasized and more complex understanding is developed
- Cognitive development: Recall/memory; concentration; problem-solving, communication and decision-making
- Psycho/socio development: Desire to be active, develop confidence, dedication and commitment, communication and relational skills
- Refining quality of movement as reflected in skill performance

What does NOT belong in the gymnastics program?

- Multiple, high impact repetitions
- Skill development before physical preparation
- Inflexible teaching approaches
- Overtraining and under-recovery due to excessive training hours

Performance Qualities

- All gymnasts in this stage should have opportunities to perform for an audience, whether it is at the end of class, in an end-of-year show or club gymnestrada. Performances should be fun, with creative group routines and interesting music and props.
- By the end of this stage, gymnasts in competitive programs may also be participating in formal competitions. The purpose of competition is to introduce the process and format of competition, and to allow children to enjoy performing their skills and routines.
- **There is no focus on competitive results.**

Amount of Time in Gymnastics

- Recreational gymnastics programs: one or two classes per week for up to 1- 3 hours per class
- Advanced programs for children aged 7-8: two or three classes per week for 1.5 to 3 hours per class, 3 to 6 hours per week
- Competitive gymnasts (9+ years old): up to three classes per week of 3 hours per class; **maximum of 9 hours per week.**
- Number of weeks per year: up to 40 - 48
- The FIG training matrix does not apply for athletes with a disability
- All gymnasts should continue to participate in other activities on a regular basis, including other gymnastics disciplines
- Involvement in dance programs

Role of Parents

- Parents continue to expose participants to a range of activities, provide encouragement and show interest in participating in sport and physical activity
- Parents must listen to the participant to help identify sport preferences
- Parents will continue to maintain a balance with school, other sport and non-sport activities
- Parents should be prepared to transport participants to activities, and to pay for these activities

Programs for this stage:

Intermediate and advanced levels of the CANGYM family of programs

Provincial development programs

Programs provided through Special Olympics Canada

Type of Coach:

Certified Foundations to Gymnastics coach

Certified Foundations to Competition coach

Special Olympics Canada Competition coach



Monitoring

All gymnasts:

- Skill development
- Social skills
- Emotional and behavioural stabilities
- Cognitive abilities

Advanced level gymnasts as above PLUS:

- Height monitored every 3 months. Measurements should include standing height, sitting height and arm span
- Body alignment and symmetrical development of flexibility and strength
- Shoulder, back and hip flexibility
- Physical abilities

Events and Activities

- In-class demonstration and sharing
- Leadership becomes a portion of the class activity
- Local public demonstrations and performances
- Involvement in regional events such as standards meets, gymnaestradas, group routines
- Recognition and encouragement of effort and personal achievement
- Fun participatory events
- Mini club meets to introduce format of competition – focus on performance not comparative results
- Include activities that allow for development of self-direction and leadership skills

