

6 WINNING AT ALL LEVELS

Age: 13/14-18+ years (females)

15-18+ years (males)

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

Gymnasts may remain in this stage for several years

Gymnasts in this stage are optimizing their performance according to the goals they have set for themselves. They have well-developed abilities to perform on demand and are more results-driven than in previous stages. These athletes are striving to become the best gymnasts and have set their goals on consistent, personal best performances, which will lead to winning championships at the provincial, national and international level.

These gymnasts are quite independent and, with the coach, are partners in goal-setting and decision-making. Many are leaders among their peers, and some may begin coaching young gymnasts. It may be necessary for the gymnast to leave his/her home club to train in a high-performance environment, or to train with a different coach.

Some of these gymnasts will begin competing internationally at junior and senior level competitions and major games. The team members for future World Championships or Olympic Games will likely be selected from these athletes.

Some female athletes, and most male athletes will still be going through puberty in the early part of this stage. Ensure that standing and sitting height, arm span and weight of all gymnasts are monitored regularly, and that training programs are flexible enough to accommodate the varying developmental needs of athletes.

Gymnasts will become comfortable traveling and competing in different cities, regions and countries. They are taking their competitive performance skills to the next level and some are preparing to represent Canada. MAG and WAG athletes may be apparatus specialists, although training continues on all competitive apparatus.

What qualities will be developed in this stage?

- Refine routine skills performed at high quality and intensity
- Consolidate and increase the variety of elements and artistry
- Aim for highest standards of difficulty, composition and performance
- Gymnast should be in total command of the routine
- Pay special attention to maintaining active flexibility during PHV
- Continue to develop strength throughout this stage
- Fully develop mental preparation skills: imagery, concentration, emotional control, positive self-talk, relaxation
- Gymnasts should have a sound knowledge of competition rules, competition protocol and judging requirements for their level
- Self-discipline should be encouraged to govern safety and accepted social behaviour. The participant accepts consequences of behaviour
- Develop self-reflexivity, emotional debriefing and self-regulation skills
- Sport ethics should include ethical issues relating to competition and social maturity
- Education on concepts of doping control, weight issues
- Introduce gymnasts to media relations

Performance Qualities

- Performance standards are highest provincial, national and FIG Junior and Senior requirements, and requirements for Special Olympics World Games
- These gymnasts are competing to win championship titles. Some gymnasts are establishing their reputation in international level gymnastics

Amount of Time in Gymnastics

- MAG, WAG and RG gymnasts: 5 to 6 times per week, 4 to 5 hours per training session, including dance training and artistic preparation
- Many top Canadian gymnasts train about 24 hours per week
- AG and TG gymnasts: 12 – 18 hours per week
- 48 weeks per year
- Single or double peak periodization (e.g. Elite Canada and Canadian Championships, or important international competition)
- Training time is divided between preparing for competitions and learning important new skills

Role of Parents

- Parents become the primary support person to manage the gymnast's schedule
- Parents continue to provide a positive push, and offer unconditional support for the gymnast
- Parents will continue to pay for training and competition costs, equipment and clothing, private or specialized coaching, and other related costs (e.g. nutritionist, physiotherapy, psychologist)

Monitoring

- As intensity and volume of training increase, general health must be monitored regularly
- As training volume and intensity increase, ensure that recovery and regeneration are monitored on an individual basis

- Ongoing screening for hip and knee alignment, muscle imbalances and flexibility will help reduce the risk of injury
- Monitor for symptoms of compression, distraction and shearing, Osgood Schlatter's and others, spondylolysis
- Height and weight should be monitored monthly, and training adjusted as a function of PHV
- Monitor iron levels in female athletes
- Physical abilities testing; active flexibility monitoring is particularly important during PHV
- Monitor skills, technique and difficulty
- Continue to monitor emotional development as in previous stage

Events and Activities

- Provincial and Canadian Championships, Canada Games
- Selection events
- Training and preparation camps
- Special performances and demonstrations (club, provincial, national)
- Selected international competitions at Junior level, or beginning Senior level
- Major Games (e.g. Pan Ams, Commonwealth, Junior Pan Ams, Pacific Alliance, Special Olympics World Games)
- World Championships (age 15 only, in the year preceding an Olympics) or Age Group World Championships

GCG Programs: Canadian competitive program structure and system

GCG Coach in Training Program (for athletes interested in coaching)

Type of Coach: NCCP Competition High Performance

