

Code GSG00001 Gymnastics Safety Guidelines Reviewed July 2011 revise July 2012

GYMNASTICS SAFETY GUIDELINES

SAFETY POSTER 1

1. **ASSUMPTION OF RISK** - Participation in gymnastic activities involves motion, rotation and height in a unique environment and as such carries with it a reasonable assumption of risk.
2. **WARNING!** Catastrophic injury, paralysis or even death can result from improper conduct of the activity.
3. **POTENTIAL MEDICAL EMERGENCIES** Instructor/supervisors should be aware of the potential medical emergencies that could occur in gymnastics and be prepared to adequately respond to them in an appropriate manner.
4. **BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE** - Dress appropriately, follow accepted warm-up practices, and be mentally prepared to engage in the activity.
5. **CAREFULLY CHECK THE EQUIPMENT** - Before directly engaging in any gymnastics activity, make sure the equipment is adjusted and secured properly and that adequate matting appropriate to the activity is in the correct position.
6. **CARELESSNESS CANNOT BE TOLERATED:** Gymnastics is an activity requiring active concentration. Horseplay or any other form of carelessness not tolerated at any time for any reason. Consult your instructor.
7. **FOLLOW PROPER SKILL PROGRESSIONS:** A safe learning environment includes a correct understanding of the skills performed and following proper skill progressions. When in doubt, always consult your instructor.
8. **MASTERING BASIC SKILLS** Safe learning practices demand mastering basic skills before progressing to new and/or more difficult levels.
9. **ATTEMPTING NEW AND/OR DIFFICULT SKILLS** The readiness and ability level of the performer, the nature of the task, and the competency of the spotter taken into consideration when attempting a new or difficult skill.
10. **PROPER LANDING TECHNIQUE** Safe dismounts, as well as unintentional falls, require proper landing techniques. No amount of matting can be a fail-safe. Avoid landing on head or neck at all costs, as serious catastrophic injuries may result.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GYMNAST

SAFETY POSTER 2

1. **APPRECIATE THE RISK** Participation in gymnastics, even under the best conditions, carries with it a reasonable assumption of risk. Appreciate the fact that improper conduct of this activity can result in catastrophic injury, paralysis or even death.
2. **BE SUPERVISED** every gymnastics session should always be supervised by a competent professional. Never participate in gymnastics without proper supervision.
3. **DRESS APPROPRIATELY,** Always dress in the terms of the learning/performing situation. Use chalk, rosin, handgrips, tape, protective body equipment, etc., when appropriate. When in doubt, consult your instructor.
4. **DOUBLE CHECK EQUIPMENT:** Before every session, make sure that the apparatus is in proper working condition, is correctly aligned, and is adjusted according to individual needs. Also, be sure to have adequate and properly placed matting. When in doubt consult your instructor.
5. **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY** A clear, accurate communicative link with your teacher/coach. Make certain that both of you know exactly what, where, when, where, how and why the skill is to be performed and/or spotted.
6. **BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE** Be sure that you are physically, as well psychologically, ready to perform. Total fitness is a fundamental prerequisite to safe practices in gymnastics.
7. **MASTER BASIC SKILLS FIRST** Follow a definite progressive pattern in skill learning. Master first those basic skills that have the broadest application to the more complex skills.
8. **KNOW THE SKILL** Be sure to have an accurate visual concept of the full potential of the skill. Know how to initiate, execute, and complete the entire movement. Develop awareness for the more critical aspects of each skill.
9. **ALWAYS FOLLOW THROUGH** Once you commit to and/or go for a skill, complete it. Be keenly aware that a prime consideration is protection of your head and spinal column.
10. **KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS** Develop a healthy awareness and respect for your individual limitations in learning and performing gymnastics.

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SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR GYMNASTICS MATS

SAFETY POSTER 3

1. WARNING No gymnastic mat is fail-safe to injury. Never land on head, neck or back onto any type of mat as serious, catastrophic injury, even death, could result!
2. APPRECIATE THE PERFORMANCE LIMITS OF GYMNASTICS MATS To help insure a safe environment, instructors and participants alike must have adequate knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the use and performance limits of gymnastics mats. Whenever in doubt, consult the mat manufacturer.
3. CHOOSE MATS CAREFULLY the type of mat selected must be appropriate to the activity, sufficient in amount, and properly set-up. If in doubt, refer to the USFG Safety Manual or consult the mat manufacturer.
4. USE 'BASE' MATS FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE 'Base' mats can be used safely as; a) a resilient surface for performing tumbling activities; b) a primary surface upon which 'landing' mats are placed; and c) a means of levelling the floor surface area to that of the apparatus base plates.
5. NEVER USE 'LANDING' MATS AS A TUMBLING OR VAULTING TAKE-OFF SURFACE 'Landing' mats are designed primarily for shock absorption, not resiliency. The fundamental purpose of 'Landing' mats is to help minimise the force of impact commonly associated with controlled, feet-first landings.
6. USE ADDITIONAL MATTING WHERE APPROPRIATE when new and/or difficult skills performed; always provide additional matting where appropriate. As skill proficiency increases, the amount of matting decreased accordingly to within the acceptable specifications recommended for competition.
7. INSPECT MATS CAREFULLY ON A REGULAR BASIS. Mats should be inspected regularly for tears, soft spots, separation of foam and fatigue (failure to perform adequately). Defective mats be removed immediately from service and the activity should be adjusted accordingly.
8. SAFE USE OF GYMNASTICS MATS REQUIRES CONSTANT VIGILANCE Instructors and performers alike must maintain constant vigilance regarding potential problems that can arise during the activity and make the necessary safety adjustments i.e.: mat slippage on floor, mat-to-mat separation, performer slippage, uneven mat surface (overlapped mats).
9. NEVER RELY ON MATTING AS 'PRIMARY' SAFETY DEVICE Matting never used as a safety device in place of performer readiness, appropriate skill progressions, competent instruction/supervision, and proper spotting.
10. ALWAYS FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S GUIDELINES Reputable manufacturers provide important information regarding mat selection, use, installation, care and maintenance. Following these guidelines carefully is essential to safe conduct of the gymnastics activity.

SPOTTING-SAFETY FIRST!

SAFETY POSTER 4

The purpose of spotting is to protect the athlete and provide the needed safety assistance to make sure that the chance of an injury in performing a new or difficult skill is minimised. The second purpose is to help the athlete accomplish the skill. The key safety guidelines in spotting are:

1. BE SURE that the difficulty level of the skill is appropriate to the capabilities and experiences of the performer.
2. LEARN TO SPOT effectively the most basic skills first. Allow sufficient time to adequately master each level of spotting progressions.
3. ESTABLISH a clear, accurate communication link with the performer.
4. BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN that both you and the performer are in the proper position and ready to interact.
5. BE SURE YOU KNOW, understand and appreciate the full potential of the skill, particularly the more critical aspects of how to spot it.
6. CAREFULLY MATCH your own physical readiness and capabilities to that of each individual performer. Always insure that the margin for safety is overwhelmingly in the performer's favour.
7. LEARN what to expect from each gymnast. Make every effort to read individual weaknesses.
8. BE PREPARED for the unexpected. Maintain constant vigilance throughout the skill in its entirety.
9. DEVELOP A HEALTHY RESPECT for the risks and potential hazards involved in any spotting situation. Know your limitations.
10. **ALWAYS BE KEENLY AWARE that the prime consideration is protection of the performer's head and spinal column.**