



Special Olympics Minnesota Gymnastics Handbook

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COACH CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLE

The updated coach certification ratio tables can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota Coaches Portal under policies and fact sheets, or here: [Coach Ratio Table](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Practice ideas, skill assessment/development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport can be found at www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx

EVENTS

Athletes can compete in individual and Unified if they are registered in different events. For example, an athlete can compete in Women's individual vault and beam and Unified bars and floor. An athlete cannot compete in Women's individual vault and beam and Unified vault and beam.

Artistic Gymnastics

All levels and events listed below are for both traditional and Unified competition.

- Mixed Gender Men's and Women's (Levels A and B): vault, single bar, wide beam, floor exercise, all-around (total of all four event scores)
- Women's (Levels 1-4): vault, uneven bars, balance beam, floor exercise, all-around (total of all four event scores)
- Men's (Levels 1-4): floor exercise, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars, horizontal bar, all-around (total of all six event scores)

Rhythmic Gymnastics

Levels A, B, and C are mixed gender. Levels 1-4 are female only.

- Level A (performed seated): rope, hoop, ball, ribbon, all-around
- Level B (performed seated): rope, ball, clubs, ribbon, all-around
- Level C (performed standing): rope, hoop, ball, ribbon, all-around
- Level 1: rope, hoop, ball, ribbon, all-around
- Level 2: rope, hoop, clubs, ribbon, all-around
- Level 3: hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon, all-around
- Level 4: rope, ball, clubs, ribbon, all-around

RULES OF COMPETITION

All-Around vs. Event Specialist Gymnast

All-around athletes are male or female gymnasts who are required to compete in all events at the same level to qualify. Gymnasts must register for either all traditional or all Unified events to qualify for an all-around award. They cannot mix and match between traditional and Unified events.

Event specialists are athletes who are competing in one, two, or more events but not all events at the same level. Specialists must be on the same level at World Games but may compete in two distinct levels with one level difference between the two levels at state events.

Levels

There are seven levels of competition offered:

- Level A: Compulsory routines for gymnasts who have ambulatory limitations
- Level B: Compulsory routines for gymnasts who are unable to perform level 1 routines
- Level C: Compulsory routines performed standing for lower-level athletes. This is in rhythmic gymnastics only
- Level 1: Beginner compulsory routines
- Level 2: Intermediate compulsory routines
- Level 3: Advanced routines using compulsory skills made into own routines with own connections
- Level 4: Optional routines
 - In rhythmic, this is for athletes that have skills more advanced than level 3
 - In artistic, this is for athletes performing skills more advanced than level 3
- For all levels:
 - Coaches will determine the competition level for their athletes. Athletes must be able to safely perform all the skills in that level.
 - All-around athletes must compete at the same level in all events. If the athlete entered in all-around receives a no score in any one of the events, they are not eligible for an award in all-around.

The level that a gymnast is registered for and competes in at a regional competition will be the level they are registered for at the state competition.

SAFETY INFORMATION

Consistent with the Special Olympics philosophy that the movement is athlete-centered, the safety of athletes is the primary concern when establishing sports rules. The establishment of international guidelines for Special Olympics gymnastics compulsory and optional routines will ensure that the athletes follow a proper progression of instruction in gymnastics skills. This will reduce the incidence of injuries. Athletes who safely perform all skills in a specific level of compulsory routines should compete at that level. Competition in optional routines has been limited to advanced level gymnasts only.

Learning the proper progressions of skills instruction and correct spotting techniques is the responsibility of the gymnastics coach. Special Olympics commends those programs in which certified gymnastics instructors use the proper progression for teaching advanced gymnastics skills which is set forth in the Gymnastics Coaching Guide and these rules. However, many volunteers begin coaching with limited gymnastics experience.

These volunteers should start by teaching only the compulsory levels (A, B, C, 1). Those skills that are included in the more advanced levels should be taught by coaches with at least two years of general gymnastics coaching experience. It is recommended that coaches of advanced level gymnasts have additional training in gymnastics from what Special Olympics offers at this time.

No athletes may participate in artistic gymnastics if they have Atlanto-axial subluxation. Female athletes who have tested positive for Atlanto-axial subluxation may participate in rhythmic gymnastics. If these athletes elect to do an optional routine, they may not perform pre-acrobatic or acrobatic moves. If they do, the routine is void and the gymnast will be disqualified.

Here are some items to remember when it comes to providing a safe environment:

- Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them.
 - Keep your hands to yourself.
 - Listen to the coach.
 - When you hear the coach – stop, look, and listen to them.
 - Ask permission before leaving the gym to go anywhere.
 - Gymnasts should not be in the gym or on equipment without permission.
- Make sure gymnasts bring water to every practice or are provided a water fountain, especially in hotter climates.
- Have a first aid kit in the building and restock supplies, as necessary.
- Train all gymnasts and coaches on emergency procedures.
- Discuss safety in the gym as well as outside the gym. This includes not walking in front of dismount area, being careful around mats of different heights, and always look before walking anywhere.
- Coaches must be under the uneven bars, rings, high bar, and high beam prepared to spot. This must also be done in all levels of vaulting and parallel bars before an athlete may compete. The coach must remain there during the routine.

If the coach does not remain in position for the routine, the following deductions occur:

- Gymnast will not be judged if the coach is not in position to spot. They will be asked to dismount immediately.
- Judge will call the coach to be there. A 0.3-point deduction will be taken for undisciplined behavior.
- If the coach returns to the spotting position, the gymnast will be judged from that point. All skills performed prior to that will be considered as omitted parts and deductions taken.
- If the gymnast decides to start over, they may. If the gymnast leaves the apparatus or the coach touches the gymnast to start over, a 1.0 deduction will be taken in addition to the 0.3 for “delay of meet.”
- If the coach does not return to a spotting position and the gymnast completes their routine, the gymnast will receive a zero for a score.

Regardless of how much safety is provided, coaches should not entice or encourage their athletes to perform skills that are beyond their reasonable ability or skills that are beyond the coaches' ability to teach. Special Olympics recommends that all gymnastics coaches become safety certified in accordance with the policy endorsed by the appropriate National Governing Body.

Special Olympics concurs with the following responsibility statement:

“Even though gymnastics safety is everyone’s responsibility, the instructor or coach must bear much of it, including the responsibility to see that others do their share: the parents, the doctor, and the athletes. Prevention and remediation are major responsibilities in a broad umbrella-type program under which many other points must be included: the environment, the prescribed learning progression, and the physical preparedness of the athlete. These are the areas where the instructor/coach bears much of the moral and legal responsibility. It is not enough to warn and inform; all concerned must have an appreciation and understanding of the risk in every vigorous gymnastic activity.”

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

GYMNASTICS EQUIPMENT		RHYTHMIC EQUIPMENT
Women's	Men's	<i>Refer to Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide</i>
Floor Exercise mat (42X42)	Floor Exercise mat (42X42)	ROPE: hemp or synthetic material, length proportionate to the size of the gymnast.
Balance Beam	High (horizontal) bar	
Low Balance Beam	Pommel Horse	HOOP: wood or plastic, Diameter: Interior 60-90 centimeters Weight: minimum of 150-300 grams and up.
Uneven Bars	Vaulting Board	
Vaulting Board	Vaulting Table	BALL: rubber or synthetic material (pliable plastic), any color Diameter: 14-20 centimeters.
Vaulting Table	Parallel Bars	
Chalk and chalk box or stand	Still Rings	CLUBS: wood or synthetic material 40 to 50 centimeters from one end to the other
Mats (various sizes)	Mats (various sizes)	
Landing Mats (various sizes)	Landing Mats (various sizes)	RIBBON: width 4-6 centimeters. Length: minimum of 3 meters to a maximum of 6 meters attached to stick
Blocks (various heights & shapes) used in training or mounting equipment	Blocks (various heights & shapes) used in training or mounting equipment	
Score flasher (for meets)	Score flasher (for meets)	
	Chalk and chalk box or stand	

ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS

Special Olympics Minnesota is utilizing the Special Olympics Artistic Compulsory Routines. All rules and routines are available on the Special Olympics website.

Women's: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/gymnastics/womens-artistic-gymnastics-2019-2027>

Men's: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/gymnastics/mens-artistic-gymnastics-2019-2027>

Order of Events

Women's artistic competition and levels A and B will rotate in Olympic order. This order is vault, uneven bars, balance beam, and floor exercise. Men's artistic competition will rotate in Olympic order as well. This order is floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars, and horizontal bar. Gymnasts may be scheduled to start the meet on any event but must continue their rotation in Olympic order.

Modifications and Equipment

Please see the Special Olympics rulebook for all modifications for athletes with hearing and vision impairments (p. 5-6). Please see the Special Olympics rulebook for all equipment specifications and modifications. In general, see FIG equipment and mat specifications for competition equipment. Modifications have been made to meet skill and size requirements for Special Olympics athletes.

Attire

For men, tank tops (or a unitard) and long gymnastic pants or gymnastic shorts depending on the event. T-shirts that are tucked in may replace the tank top. Gymnasts may compete in gymnastics slippers or bare feet. Grips for bars are optional, and dowel grips are for advanced gymnasts only.

For women, long-sleeved, short-sleeved, or sleeveless leotards with optional matching shorts. Gymnasts may have either bare feet or wear gymnastic slippers. Bare legs or leg coverings of the same color as the leotard or flesh colored tights with bare feet are permitted. Grips for bars are optional, and dowel grips are for advanced gymnasts only.

For all gymnasts, their underwear should not show. Their hair should be away from their face and be tied up. There is no jewelry allowed, except for small earrings.

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS

Special Olympics Minnesota is utilizing the Special Olympics Rhythmic Compulsory Routines. All rules/routines are available at <http://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/gymnastics/rhythmic-gymnastics>.

Rules of Competition

Level A and B routines have been written for athletes who are unable to stand on their own. Level C routines have been written for athletes of lower ability level who can stand on their own. Female gymnasts can compete in levels 1-4, while levels A, B, and C are mixed gender. The order of completion for rhythmic gymnastics is rope, hoop, ball, clubs, and ribbon. Awards will be given for each event, as well as for all-around. Gymnasts may receive a maximum of five awards.

For Unified rhythmic gymnastics, all routines and regulations apply equally to athletes and Unified partners. Unified competition is only in the group events. There must be an equal number of athletes and Unified partners in each group.

Apparatus and Modifications

The size of the apparatus can range from child size to senior equipment, based on the gymnast's size and skill level. Equipment should be color coordinated with the athlete's leotard. Equipment will be checked prior to competition, as well as during competition, as the gymnast leaves the floor after each routine. If the apparatus does not meet specification, a deduction of 0.3 points will be taken from the score on that event.

For further specifications of each apparatus please see pages 7-9 of the Special Olympics rulebook. In addition, please see the Special Olympics rulebook for all modifications for athletes with hearing and vision impairments (p. 9-10).

Attire

For workouts, a leotard can be worn with footless tights, shorts, or a skirt. Rhythmic half-slippers, bare feet, or socks all can be worn. At competitions, gymnasts should wear a leotard or unitard of any color. Long tights down to the ankle may be worn. Skirted leotards with the skirt no longer than the upper thigh, or matching shorts, are acceptable. Long tights down to the ankle may be worn under the leotard.

Leotards may be with or without sleeves, but dance leotards with narrow straps or low-cut back are not allowed. The cut of the leotard at the top of the legs must not go beyond the fold of the crotch. Any decoration added to the leotard, either loose or stuck to the garment, must adhere to the leotard. Leotards must be non-transparent material. Lace or other sheer fabric should be lined in all the area of the trunk.

For all gymnasts, their underwear should not show. Their hair should be away from their face and be tied up. There is no jewelry allowed, except for small earrings.

JUDGING

One to four judges can be used on each panel for each event. When a panel consists of two or three judges, all scores will be averaged to determine the score for that panel. When four judges comprise a panel, the high and low scores will be eliminated, and the remaining scores will be averaged.

Judges will place themselves around the event mat or apparatus and may consult among themselves if directed to do so by the head judge. If the judges' scores are not "in range," there is a consultation, followed by the final average score being flashed.

Due to the importance of the divisioning process and in fairness to all, the following rule will be in effect once the competition begins: Judges are not allowed to talk with coaches, parents, or athletes concerning a gymnast's routine. This rule applies on and off the floor of competition. If such communications occur, removal of the judge will be recommended to event management.

Each judge is responsible to judge the entire routine and determine the score based on 10.0 points. The out-of-range guidelines when averaging scores are as follows:

9.5 – 10.0	0.10
9.0 – 9.45	0.30
8.0 – 8.95	0.50
0.0 – 7.95	1.00

Neutral deductions are taken off the final score by the head judge on the event. There is a 4.0-point maximum to these deductions.

Coaches must be visible to the judges when assisting the gymnast from the sideline, as deductions are applied. Coaches are encouraged to train the athletes to memorize their routines as best as possible. Coaches may not speak directly with a judge at any point during the competition. If there are any concerns, please speak directly with event management. A coach may be asked to leave the competition if this rule is not followed.

Deduction Examples

Improper attire	0.30
Improper equipment and use of aids	0.80*
Unsportsmanlike behavior	0.30 each
Failure to present to judges before or after	0.30 each
Failure to remove board or mounting surface	0.30
Coaching assistance (physical)	0.50 each
Coaching assistance (verbal)	0.30 each
Coaching assistance (signals)	0.10 each
Not starting within 30 seconds of judges' signal	0.30
Not displaying competition number (if provided)	0.30

*In case of special disability, a coach may submit a petition to event management prior to competition.

SCORING

Execution deductions are applied to each individual element. Specific deductions are in addition to general deductions. Specific deductions include:

- Small errors (0.10) – includes bent arms, knees, leg separation, loss of balance, wrong hand placement, etc.
- Medium errors (0.30) – includes the same as small errors but done to a greater extent.
- Large errors (0.40) – includes excessive or extreme bending of arms or knees, leg separation, or loss of balance.
- Very large errors (0.50).
- Falls (0.50) – includes falls on and off the apparatus.
- Rhythm deductions (0.10/0.30) – unwanted stops / poor rhythm throughout the routine.

Amplitude deductions are taken off each individual element using the above execution guidelines. Amplitude includes the range of motion and how large or compressed the skill shown is compared to the ultimate.

An entire routine may be reversed without deductions, and a single element may be reversed without deductions if it does not change the floor pattern.

In evaluating each optional routine, the judge gives a score for difficulty, execution and presentation, combination and bonus value of the routine based upon the Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) rules for a 10.0 score. Deductions are taken based on missing skills according to the skills required for each level and execution errors as noted beforehand.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes by leading by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition
- Always finish an event; Never quit

Fair Play Always

- Comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play
- Respect the decision of the officials
- Strategy discussions with any athlete and/or partner are prohibited once the event begins
 - If an official determines that a coach, partner, or spectator is violating this rule, the official may sanction the offending individual. Sanctions may include verbal warning, citing the coach/partner with unsportsmanlike conduct, or expulsion from the games.