

A General Guide to Competition For Parents



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This booklet is a general guide for parents and gymnasts who are entering the USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic Program. The information contained here is meant help make your competitive experience a positive and rewarding one.

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So, You Made The Team

Meet Etiquette for Gymnasts and Family Members

Before the Day of the Meet

Whether your meet is in your own facility or in another team's gym, it is important that you and your athlete remember that hosting a meet takes a great deal of work.

The hosting gym receives a roster of athletes from each gym wishing to participate in the competition. To give everyone an equal opportunity to take part in the meet, a deadline date is usually established. The deadline for entries can be up to six weeks to ten days prior to the event.

When the hosting gym gets all of the rosters, they may then begin to establish sessions and times. This all takes time. Please DO NOT call the hosting gym for information. The proper etiquette is to ask your own coach. It is his/her responsibility to furnish you with this information. Sometimes there are unforeseen problems that might cause a delay in this information being communicated, so be patient.

Each gym club has a set of rules and regulations that have been established for your comfort and safety. ALWAYS follow the hosting gym's rules. Here are a few rules that are common to ALL meets:

**NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY
NO PARENTS OR SIBLINGS IN THE COMPETITION AREA
NO FOOD OR DRINKS IN THE GYM PROPER
NO PARENTS ALLOWED TO QUESTION A JUDGE
NO SPECTATORS ALLOWED ON ANY EQUIPMENT
NO PROFANITY
NO UNSPORTSMANLIKE BEHAVIOR
NO DESTRUCTION OF GYM PROPERTY**

Competitive Dress Code

In gymnastics, women wear a long sleeved leotard (sleeveless tanks have been approved for competition) while men wear a sleeveless unitard with stirrup pants or shorts. Many training schools have a coordinating warm-up suit as part of their competitive apparel.

Stretch and Warm-Up Session

Stretch and warm-up sessions are usually held 1 - 2 hours before competition begins. Gymnasts should arrive 15 minutes early to check in, obtain their competition number and become organized. Stretching and warm-up should be done as a team.

Opening Ceremonies and Competition

At the conclusion of warm-ups, a gymnast should report to his/her coach to prepare for Opening Ceremonies. Gymnasts are usually queued up in ascending height order and march into the gym as a team.

Once all teams and officials have been introduced, it is customary to begin the contest with the National Anthem or the Pledge of Allegiance. During this solemn period, please stand at attention and maintain silence, unless singing the anthem or speaking the pledge.

Once the ceremonies are concluded the gymnast will be directed to his/her first event. Most gyms have a designated "waiting area" for the contestants. Report to your coach immediately before and after an event. Many coaches prefer that their athletes wear warm-up suits between events, so listen to your coach.

Competing is a Privilege

You have earned the right to compete in the USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic program, through countless hours of hard work and dedication to the sport. Please remember that competing is a privilege and as such, should not be taken for granted. All gymnasts should conduct themselves with dignity, composure and good sportsmanship.

At each event gymnasts return the Head Judge's salute prior to beginning the exercise. If you should fall from a piece of equipment, you have a certain amount of time to remount the apparatus. Take that time allotted to compose yourself prior to commencing your routine.

At all meets, please keep in mind that you are a guest, whether you are competing at a "home" meet or at an "away" meet. Treat the hosting facility, its equipment and all other gymnasts with respect and courtesy. Support your teammates by cheering in a courteous manner and congratulating them. Be friendly and polite to all judges, coaches and other gymnasts *regardless of whose team they are on*.

IT IS SUGGESTED THAT YOU REMAIN IN THE COMPETITIVE AREA UNTIL AFTER THE AWARDS CEREMONY, however each gym has its own rules regarding this issue.

Receiving Awards In Public

Most meets have a formal system for presenting awards. As an athlete, a demonstration of courtesy and gratitude is appropriate. It is customary to accept awards by thanking the presenter with a firm handshake. Congratulate the other athletes receiving awards as well. Stay on the awards podium for a brief time after all gymnasts have received their awards; this will enable parents and relatives to take your photo on the platform.

Under no circumstances should you show disappointment in the awards that you are given.

Gymnastics Scoring Guide for Spectators

The sport of gymnastics combines athletic strength, technical perfection and graceful presentation. There are two categories of competition, Compulsory and Optional.

There are four competitive events in women's gymnastics: Vault, Uneven Bars, Balance Beam and Floor Exercise. The scoring in gymnastics is a negative system, based upon a perfect routine of 10.00 points. Judges make specific deductions for errors throughout the routine, total the deductions and subtract that amount from 10.00 points to

arrive at the score. Deductions are made for falls, bent arms and legs, flexed feet, poor rhythm, improper conduct of a gymnast or coach, for improper dress and for coaches spotting the performer. There are normally two judges per event and each score must be within specific ranges of each other; the scores are averaged and the final score flashed. **If** the scores are not within acceptable ranges the judges must confer and adjust each score until they are within the allotted margin and then average the scores.

Gymnasts who perform in all events receive an All-Around score, which is the total of all events.

How does the Illinois State Committee arrive @ State Series Schedule

- National Office Sets National Meets
- Region 5 Committee sets their Schedule accordingly
- State Committee (Board) sets it schedule according to National and Regional

Other Useful Information

Each year, prior to his/her first competition, every competitor in the J. O. Program will need to have a valid registration number. The USA Gymnastics membership office assigns this Team Member number. 100% of all Athletes appearing in a USAG Sanctioned Event must be pre-registered and their number must be for the current year. The Team Member season begins each August 1 and runs through the following July 31. All Team Member numbers are automatically null and void each July 31, which means you must register each year.

Once you have sent in your Team Membership registration form, along with payment, your gym will receive a computer printout from the USAG membership dept. (or download it from their Website) with your name and number.

Shortly after registration you will receive a Team Member card from USAG. Please keep this card with you at all meets. This Card entitles the gymnasts to enter any state meet as a spectator free of charge.

Code of Ethics and Rights & Obligations of Gymnasts

The USA Gymnastics program has a *Code of Ethics* chapter in their Rules and Policies manual. Ask your coach to cover this important chapter with you. They also list the *Rights and Obligations of Gymnasts*, which are included below:

THE GYMNAST HAS THE RIGHT TO:

- A. **Compete in the meet if she has met all the requirements for eligibility and is properly entered.**
- B. **Enter into any of the USA Gymnastics sponsored competitions without being affiliated with any organization or team. However, a Women's USA Gymnastics Professional member acting as coach must accompany the gymnast.**
- C. **Use any of the facilities provided by the meet organizing committee.**
- D. **Use the services of any person connected officially with the meet (i.e., physician, trainer, music manager, etc.).**

- E. In the case of a tie, expect her award to be mailed to her club address, free of charge, not later than one (1) month after the completion of the meet, if the award is not available at the meet.
- F. Expect courteous and respectful treatment from all participants and meet personnel.
- G. Expect that the competition site provide a safe and adequate environment, allowing her to perform at the best of her ability.

THE GYMNAST IS OBLIGATED TO:

- A. Obtain a Team Member number from the USA Gymnastics office and be prepared to show her membership card at any sanctioned event in which she participates.
- B. Follow the USA Gymnastics Code of Ethics. (See Section 1, Chapter 2.)
- C. Perform in the meet to the best of her ability.
- D. Be familiar with the rules of the meet and schedule of the meet events and lineup.
- E. Be present at the site of the meet for sufficient warm-up.
- F. Remain in the area of competition, which is designated for gymnasts as competitors or as observers.
- G. Obey warm-up regulations and rotation schedules.
- H. Present herself in the proper attire (no bare midriffs, backless leotards, T-shirts or boxer shorts). Leotard and/or warm-up suit should be worn for opening, closing and award ceremonies. Leg opening on competitive leotards must NOT be cut or rolled above the gymnast's hipbone. A deduction will be applied for an infraction. For competition, the gymnast may wear a sleeveless leotard and may be barefooted or wear gymnastics footwear.
- I. Be well groomed in her appearance:
 - a. Clean attire.
 - b. Hair secured away from the face.
 - c. Free from any object, which may hinder or endanger her safety (jewelry, etc.).
- J. Accept the received score without criticism or comment.
- K. Conform to the regulations of the meet. Upon violating its rules, the Meet Referee may warn her once; the second time she shall be told that her right to continue competition is terminated for the remainder of the meet.
- L. Be ready to go on from the moment she is in position of "waiting" (two or more gymnasts ahead of her) with her competitor number card available or worn.
- M. Remain seated at all times while not performing, with all of her belongings in her competition bag neatly placed out of sight.
- N. Eat or drink outside of the competition area.
- O. Perform in a most disciplined and elegant manner.
- P. Be courteous, respectful and polite to all meet officials, coaches, hostesses, competitors and associated persons.
- Q. Exhibit self-control and calmness in the case of a fall or injury.
- R. Be aware that infringement of obligations could lead to deduction and/or expulsion by the jury.
- S. Flash her vault number, at state level and above optional meets.
- T. Wear her competitive number at National level competitions, or at any other competition which supplies competitive numbers to be worn on the back.

Junior Olympic Competitive Program

There are 7 competitive levels in the USAG program. Levels 4, 5, and 6, are Compulsory levels that require all gymnasts to perform the same routine, and are judged according to a norm as well as to each other. Level 7 has elements that must be performed but the coaches determine choreography of the routines. Levels 8, 9 and 10 are Optional levels in which gymnasts perform routines based on difficulty, execution and composition.

Each level in the J. O. Program has its own rules regarding age and minimum standards for mobility. In addition to a minimum entry age, there are also various age divisions within a level. For example, you must be 7 years old to compete at Level 5 and the age divisions are 7-8 year olds, 9-11 year olds, and 12 and over. These divisions are also referred to as Children, Juniors and Seniors.

Mobility Between Levels

Each level in the J. O. Program has a **minimum standard** for mobility, or movement to the next level. Please refer to the National R&P for these minimum standards. This can be found at usa-gymnastics.org.

It is important to remember that the scores required to move upward in a level are the ***MINIMUM STANDARD*** needed for mobility. ***It is also important for parents and gymnasts to know that each coach and each club may have their own requirements that EXCEED the minimum standard.***

Achieving the minimum mobility score at one level does not mean that the gymnast will be ***capable*** of performing routines at the next level.

Competitions

Every gymnastic club has its own agenda with regards to when, where and how many meets a gymnast will attend. There are however, some common meets that most gyms try to attend and those are the Sectional, State, Regional and National competitions.

Not all levels go to all of the special meets mentioned above. The level that the gymnast is in determines the highest Championship level in which she will compete. The chart below lists the highest Championship meet for each level:

LEVEL	SECTIONAL	STATE	REGIONAL	NATIONAL
4	Determined by State Committee	Determined by State Committee	No	No
5	Determined by State Committee	Determined by State Committee	No	No
6	Determined by State Committee	Yes	No	No
7	Determined by State Committee	Yes	No	No
8	Determined by State Committee	Yes	Determined by the Regional Committee	No
9	Determined by State Committee	Yes	Yes	No
10	Determined by State Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes

The following chart is what the Illinois State and the Region 5 Committee have determined will be in effect in Illinois

Level	Sectional	State	Regional	National
4	NO	YES	NO	NO
5	NO	YES	NO	NO
6	NO	YES	NO	NO

7	NO	YES	NO	NO
8	NO	YES	YES	NO
9	NO	YES	YES	YES Easterns
10	NO	YES	YES	YES

Awards

The minimum number and/or type of awards that must be distributed are determined by USA Gymnastics. However, many hosting facilities chose to exceed the minimum number/type of awards given at local meets, while many States set their own standards for awards.

Achievement Awards

In Illinois, Level 4 & 5 are currently achievement levels, awards are given based on score rather than placement.

This system was designed to encourage the beginning gymnast by giving her an opportunity to receive recognition based on *her* performance alone. Each color achievement ribbon represents a range of scores:

Ribbon Color	Individual Scores	All-Around at Sectionals
Blue Ribbon	9.00	35.00
Red Ribbon	8.00	33.00
White Ribbon	7.50	31.00
Yellow Ribbon	7.00	29.00

Placement Awards

Gymnasts are ranked in the order that they finish on each event and/or in the all-around (the total of all four events). First, second and third place, etc., awards are given out, with the number of places receiving awards determined by the number of gymnasts entered in a given age group. These awards are typically given in the form of ribbons, medals and occasionally, as trophies.

Level 4 State Meet will receive Placement for All-Around only

Level 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 State Meet will also receive Placement for Events and All-Around.

Team Awards

The final type of award that may be earned at a competition falls under the category of Team Awards. Team awards can be earned for an Age Group of gymnasts (as covered in the USA Gymnastics Rules & Policies), as well as for Combined Age-Group Team. The age group score is usually determined by taking the top 3 scores per event or all-around, per age group, while the Combined Age Group Team score is determined by taking the top 5 (in some cases 6) scores per event or all-around, despite age.

Regardless of the type of awards offered at a competition, it is important to remember that it is not the winning that counts, but the effort and sense of personal accomplishment that an athlete feels when doing her “personal best”.

A Final Note

Please remember that the PROCESS of learning during competition is much more important than the OUTCOME

This communication is meant as a very general guideline to help you and your child with the most frequently asked questions about competition in the USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic Program. Every gym/coach has rules that are specific to that agency or coach, so please take the time to ask and understand those rules. It is our sincere wish that your competitive experience be a positive and rewarding one.