

Competitive Gymnastics

at Kerikeri Gymnastics Club



To be a competitive gymnast it takes time to develop first strength and flexibility then co-ordination, spatial awareness and discipline. Attention to basics training is essential to ensure gymnasts have the correct technique to safely and efficiently perform more difficult skills in the future.

Our aim is to provide an opportunity to all gymnasts to achieve to their maximum potential.

Here are just a few of the benefits of competitive gymnastics:

- Develops physical attributes such as muscle memory, strength, flexibility, kinesthetic and haptic awareness, depth perception, co-ordination and agility
- Develops mental attributes such as socialization, discipline, organization, prioritization, internal motivation, respect and courage
- Challenges the mind and body to reach new goals
- Develops healthy minds and bodies for now and later life
- Teaches how to deal with disappointment and overcome it

Gymnastics is one of the most comprehensive sports to build well-rounded, healthy individuals. Our gymnasts tend to excel at school and in other sports. They have high self confidence, because they know that if they set their mind to a task they can achieve it.

Commitment

Competition gymnastics is a big commitment not only for the gymnast but also for the gymnast's family. Children from our general gymnastics classes who show natural ability, flexibility, strength, and a good attitude are chosen for competition gymnastics. These children are then given the chance to compete against other children of a similar skill range.

Competitive gymnastics is different from most other competitive sports in that athletes are expected to commit high amounts of hours per week very early on in their training. Where most sports only begin elite training at late high school age, gymnasts will reach their peak in their mid-late teens and therefore must fully commit to their training quite early if they want to achieve good results and reach a high level. Being selected into our competitive team means that your child shows great potential and enthusiasm for the sport – they will need to make gymnastics their priority over other sports if they want to achieve their potential and be successful.

The training sessions are very focused and require a great deal of effort and concentration. A competitive programme requires significant time spent in the gym, and training hours continue to increase as the gymnast progresses through the steps/levels.

We have set days and sessions for each level to ensure that the gymnasts can receive the most beneficial training. If a gymnast cannot commit to the required hours and/or attend the correct sessions for their Step then they will be unable to remain in our competitive program. These hours are a year-round commitment – although the competitive season itself only runs through the winter months, training maintains the same intensity throughout the year (including the school holidays). **Please inform us as soon as possible if you have planned a holiday or extended trip away** so that we can work around it.

Gymsports NZ recommends the following training hours:

Step	Recommended hours
STEP 1	2 hours
STEP 2	4 hours
STEP 3	6 hours
STEP 4	8 hours
STEP 5	10 hours
STEP 6	12 hours

Gymnast Expectations

At training:

- Be on time and prepared for each training session. This means being in your training gear (either a leotard or a tight-fitted sports-appropriate crop top, with either leggings or shorts) with hair tied up and any strapping/supports already on. Gymnasts should always have had a small healthy snack before training. Please go toilet before warmup starts!
- You are expected to put full effort and concentration into every session. Listen to your coaches instructions and do your very best. Help move equipment around and do what you can to keep the gym tidy
- Respect other gymnasts and coaches



At competitions:

- Gymnasts are required to be in their full club uniform (this is provided to them before each comp) with their hair securely tied up – we prefer them to have French plaits, as this ensures no hair can fall into their face and distract them, however a tight ponytail is fine. Jewellery is not permitted (small stud earrings are fine) and neither is nail polish. Underwear cannot be visible – this includes bra straps
- Gymnasts must remain on the competition floor until their session is over.
- Gymnasts are not permitted to speak to the judges unless the judges invite them to. They are however encouraged to cheer on their team members and other competitors. Make friends with the other girls in your group, because you'll likely move through the levels with them for the next few years
- Gymnasts are encouraged to have a competition bag on the Gym Floor to keep all their belongings together while competing. Gymnasts will need:
 - ✓ A water bottle
 - ✓ Socks on colder days to keep feet warm!
 - ✓ Barley sugar type lollies are a good idea to keep sugar levels up
 - ✓ Hand guards (if used)
 - ✓ Spare music cd (only applicable to gymnasts Step 6 and above)

Parent/caregiver Expectations

At training:

- If possible please do not stay to watch your child train. It's understandable to want to see them improve, but the presence of a parent/caregiver can actually be very off-putting for gymnasts. Even the most supporting and well-meaning parent/caregiver can unknowingly put pressure on their child simply by being there, as the gymnast feels they must show you their very best (because they want to impress you!). However this is actually detrimental to the gymnast, as training should be a low-pressure environment. Gymnastics is a sport of falling and making mistakes in order to improve, and if the child does not feel they can make mistakes then their progress will be hindered
- If you are present at their training sessions, do not communicate with your child or their coach in any way during the training session (however, feel free to catch up with the coach before or after). This is partly due to the reason above, and partly due to the fact that it undermines the focus that the gymnasts should have on their coach. Gymnastics is a very complex and constantly evolving sport, and

often what looks like a simple solution on the sideline is not actually a beneficial option. If you are interested in pursuing coaching we'd love you to (we always need more coaches!), but the middle of your child's training session is not the time for this. There are a wide variety of coaching courses available throughout the year – if you are interested in this please speak to Janet and she can get you started

- If you are wanting to stay while your child trains, we'd love some assistance at our front desk and in other areas of the club. We do encourage parents to take part in club activities and to involve themselves in their child's training – there are a few ways you can do this, which includes helping
- Please inform us if your child will be away or late to training. If you don't already have your coaches number please ask them – a text is often the quickest and easiest way to maintain contact. If your child is injured we will most likely request that they still attend at least part of their training sessions. If they have a contagious illness or open wounds please keep them home! If they are just a bit under the weather, please send them along but let us know so that leeway can be given at training
- Provide a training-free haven at home. Gymnasts should not feel pressured to practise their skills or conditioning work outside of the gym. This is very typical in the younger and newer ones, who tend to want to do gymnastics 24/7 – the enthusiasm is great, but they do need a break or they'll burn out. Encourage them to rest, and play other games. We want them 100% focussed at training, and they can't do this if they're exhausted from doing handstands all day!
- Above all, support and encourage your gymnast. As their parent/caregiver, it's hugely important that you are their #1 fan, and that they know it. Be excited when they come home telling you they got a new skill, even if you have no idea what it is. Keep in contact with their coach so you're up to date on their progress. Respect other gymnasts and their parents. If you have any questions or concerns please speak to either their coach or Janet

At competitions:

- Please refrain from attempting to contact your child for any reason when they are on the competition floor. This can result in them and/or their team being disqualified, and also distracts them from the task at hand
- Bring cash! A lot of clubs charge an entry fee for spectators, it's usually only a few dollars but you don't want to be caught unaware. There is also usually a canteen for food and drinks. Most clubs do not have eftpos and will not provide cashout at the office
- You are welcome to take photos but under no circumstances should you EVER use the flash setting on your camera. This is a matter of safety – a flash distracts the gymnasts and they may fall and injure themselves. You can and will be warned and then removed from the competition for this! Some clubs will require you to 'register' your camera as you come in
- Support not only our gymnasts, but all gymnasts competing from all clubs. This shows good sportsmanship and also will help develop relationships with parents and gymnasts from other clubs – gymnasts tend to move up the levels at a similar rate so you'll get to know the local supporters. However please be aware that loud noises can be distracting to others competing so loud cheering and whistles probably aren't the best idea
- Remember your child's coach is there, and it is their job to coach. Your job is to support. It's very tempting after a competition to analyse every routine and question the scores and bring up mistakes (even lightheartedly) – however this is not beneficial to the gymnast. The best support you can provide your child is to be proud of them and reinforce with them that doing their best is the most important aspect of competition. Competitions place a lot of pressure on gymnasts, and the time directly afterwards should be reserved entirely for praise. Their coach will go over the constructive stuff with them in the next training session



Fees

As mentioned previously, gymnastics requires many hours of training to reach the standards required for competition. As gymnasts move to higher levels of competition more hours of training are required. We have devised a fee schedule where the 'per hour' rate is reduced as the hours of training increase. If you would like to see the fee breakdown we have it available for viewing.

Competitive fees can be paid in two parts through the term if need be, however the first part must be paid by the 'due' date (usually the 20th of the month).

Steps

In New Zealand, we work on a 'steps' programme rather than 'levels'. In Women's Artistic Gymnastics, there is step 1-10. Each step has an 'overs' and an 'unders' age-group category, each of which receives medals for first, second and third place. The teams can consist of up to four gymnasts from the same club, from either age category. Three scores from the four apparatuses contribute to the overall team score.

Steps 1-5 have set routines and choreographed floor routines, which makes comparisons easy for the judges. Step 6 has optional routines and is the first level where gymnasts are allowed to have unique floor routines, performed to their own choice in music.

Steps 7-10 are regarded as 'senior levels' and these girls compete two days, day one for the all-around and team competition and day two for apparatus placings.

The idea of competitions is to show everyone how much they have progressed and have some fun doing it! Often athletes will remain at the same step for longer than a year, this helps them to be able to perfect their routines. Gymnasts from Step 5 upwards can be selected to compete at the National Championships for their region, the biggest annual competition held in NZ.



Competitions

Competitions take place approximately every few weeks during competition season (usually from May to October). These are held mainly in the Northland (Kaitiaki and Whangarei) and Auckland regions, as well as a few also taking place outside of this area.



Each year we expect our Step 1s and 2s to enter all three Northland-based competitions; our Step 3s to enter all three Northland competitions and at least one Auckland competition; and our Step 4s and above to enter as many competitions as possible (some of these extend past Auckland, such as Hamilton or Tauranga). Competitions are usually held on Saturdays and can cost anywhere between \$30-50 to enter (we will advise you of this prior). This fee is non-refundable. Withdrawal due to injury or sickness will require a doctor's certificate for us to request a refund from the host club.

Competition days are divided up into sessions for each Step. Each session usually takes several hours, although each gymnast only performs one routine per apparatus (plus a few warm-ups to get a feel for the equipment). Gymnasts will always have a coach from their club to guide them and to ensure they achieve the best mark they can. Sessions can and will be brought forward if the competition is running ahead of schedule, so please ensure you are at the venue at least half an hour before the scheduled start time.

Competition dates will always be up on our calendar in the gym, and as each date approaches we will email you more information. Not all gymnasts will enter all competitions – sometimes a gymnast is not ready to attend a certain competition, and we would rather wait a few more weeks so that they can do well instead of sending them unprepared. Selection for each competition is at their coaches discretion.

Scoring

There are between 2 and 6 judges on each panel (depending on the competition). They will score your gymnast out of a maximum total of 15. This score will be shown after the gymnast has completed the routine. This is divided into two sections:



E Score

This is the 'Execution Score' and is marked out of 10. Gymnasts are given deductions that can range from 0.1 to 1.0 for each mistake – this is most often bent legs, unpointed toes, fumbles on landings etc. The 'neater' the routine, the higher the E score they will be given. Gymnasts are not 'rewarded' for a good routine, that is you cannot have any points added for doing something well – there are only deductions.

D Score

The D score is more on the 'technical' side of things and is scored out of 5. Each routine has set skills that have a set requirement – for instance a split leap that must reach 180° (full split) in the air. If the skill is not performed, or is performed but doesn't reach the requirement, the D score loses 0.5. Most routines also have connections required – for instance a cartwheel directly into a backward walkover. If the gymnast performs the skills but stops in between (therefore losing the 'connection') the D score loses 0.3.

For instance: A gymnast performs a routine. She does not reach the requirements for two of her skills, therefore she loses 0.5 for each, so her total D score is 4. This combined with the maximum E score of 10 means that her total score can only be marked out of 14 (rather than the 15 she would have had if she had achieved those skills). So any E score (execution) deductions that she might get are now coming off her mark of 14 rather than 15.

In order to move onto the next Step, gymnasts must achieve a pass mark of 50.00 OVERALL (all four apparatus marks combined). Gymnasts must achieve their pass mark at two separate competitions in order to move up to the next step. If a gymnast scores over 56.00 they are not allowed to compete that level again (even if it's their first pass mark) and must move to the next Step - they are also allowed to skip a Step at the discretion of their coach.

From Step 7 onwards this scoring system changes quite a bit, and this will be explained when your gymnast reaches this level (as its quite complicated!).



If you have any questions please don't hesitate to speak to either Janet or your child's coach