

## INSTRUCTIONS

This Learning Packet has two parts: (1) text to read and (2) questions to answer.

The text describes a particular sport or physical activity, and relates its history, rules, playing techniques, scoring, notes and news.

The Response Forms (questions and puzzles) check your understanding and appreciation of the sport or physical activity.

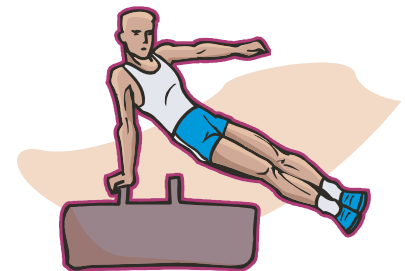
## INTRODUCTION

Some people consider gymnastics to be the purest of all sports or athletic activities. The human body can perform movements that are exquisite to behold. For this reason, gymnastics is visually exciting. Yet many casual viewers and enthusiasts alike do not realize how much dedication, skill and training are required on the part of gymnastic performers.

Gymnastics has grown in popularity in the United States, perhaps due to the good press given to this sport in recent Olympic competitions. Currently, there are about 40,000 competing gymnasts in the United States.

## HISTORY OF GYMNASTICS

Gymnastics has been popular since ancient Greece. However, “modern” gymnastics began only in the 1820s, when Ludwig Jahn founded gymnasiums, called “Turnverein,” throughout Germany. Jahn also invented equipment, including parallel bars, the horizontal bar, rings and the horse. This equipment is still in use today.



The first gym club was built in America in 1850. The first college to train teachers in gymnastics began in 1865. In 1888, the Amateur Gymnastics Association was founded in England.

Men’s gymnastics was one of the original seven sports included in the first modern

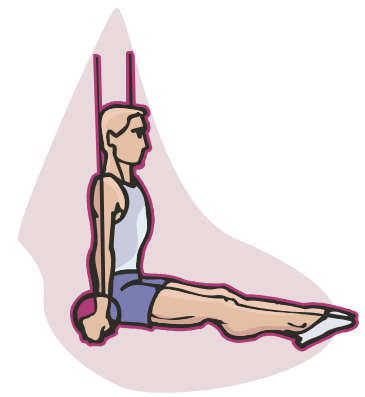
Olympic Games, held at Athens in 1896. Starting in 1928, women were included in the competition. In 1950, the world championships were introduced. They have been held regularly at four-year intervals ever since.

## TRAINING REQUIRED

Gymnastics is similar to ballet in terms of the physical demands and personal sacrifice required. Aspiring gymnasts typically start to train seriously when they are about eight years old. Two organizations, the Junior Olympic program of the United States Gymnastic Federation (USGF) and the Junior Olympic Gymnastic Program of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), offer classes for young people from nine to eighteen years of age.

Many high schools and colleges offer comprehensive programs in gymnastics. At the high school level, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) oversees the rules and regulations for both men and women engaged in gymnastics.

A final state high school championship is the culminating year-end event held annually. College-level gymnastics is controlled by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).



Currently, Eastern European countries, particularly Romania and Russia, dominate the international gymnastics scene. Children in these countries tend to start their training at an earlier age than do American children. Also, the government directs the athletic programs. These programs tend to combine the best elements of gymnastic training from many different countries.

## HOW GYMNASTICS IS PERFORMED

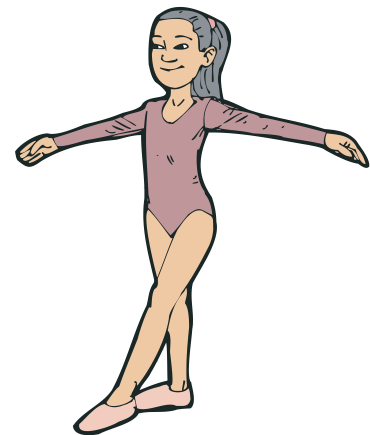
### *GYMNASTIC TERMS AND MOVES*

The following terms illustrate the type of language gymnasts use to describe specific moves. Just as baseball, golf, bowling and other sports have their own language, so does gymnastics. On the next page are some important and frequently-heard terms in gymnastics:

**Axis** An imaginary line around which the body rotates.

**Arab spring** A move in which the legs come together as the body makes a one-quarter turn (similar to a cartwheel).

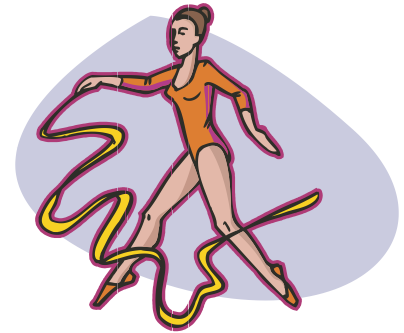
<b>Bridge position</b>	As the body is in a handstand position, the shoulders move away from the hands while the feet reach toward the floor, slightly apart. The knees are bent and the body forms a wide back arch.
<b>Dislocate</b>	On the rings, the legs are thrown up and back as the arms are spread out to the side. The body is arched as the feet are swung back down to touch the floor.
<b>Felge</b>	On the parallel bars, the gymnast hangs upside down as he/she turns backward and lets go, re-grasping the parallel bars in the hang or front positions.
<b>Hecht jump</b>	A jump executed from the highest of two asymmetrical bars in which the body is folded around the lower bar and continues to circle until the legs point down at a 45-degree angle. The body is then extended from the hips as the gymnast jumps to the floor with legs straightened and arms extended.
<b>Piked position</b>	The standard position for performing a variety of exercises in which the knees are straight and the hips flexed as far as possible.
<b>Tuck</b>	The body position where the back is rounded and the chin is on the chest. The knees are also bent up to the chest.
<b>Straddle</b>	A body position where the legs are apart.
<b>Russian giant</b>	A movement done on the horizontal bar. This is also called the inverted giant swing.
<b>Split right angle</b>	A move done on both the rings and parallel bars, also known as the “straddle L” position.



## *TYPES OF GYMNASTICS*

The two types of gymnastics most commonly seen in competition are artistic gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics. Artistic events are performed on equipment and on floor mats. In the men's division, there are six events: floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars and the horizontal bar. The women's division includes four events: floor exercise, uneven bars, vault and balance beams.

Rhythmic gymnastics is a mix of acrobatics, juggling and ballet. Gymnasts are required to perform movements that show off their flexibility and dexterity. Many use balls, ropes, hoops and ribbons as part of the performance. Technically called "gymnastique moderne," this form of gymnastics originated in France and is performed only by women.



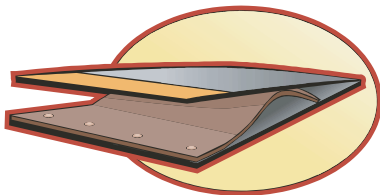
## **GYMNASTIC TECHNIQUES**

### *WOMEN'S AND MEN'S GYMNASTIC SKILLS*

Below is a sample of traditional women's and men's gymnastic skills. Remember, though, that this is just a sample of the many requirements for competition.

#### **Women's Olympic Vaulting**

In competition, the vault exercise is divided into two sections called first and second flight. First flight, or the first half of a movement, is the point at which judges carefully watch the take-off, including the body lifting through the air until it reaches the vault. In the second flight, moves from the vault to the dismount are stressed, including balance, stretch of the body and general direction.



#### **Men's Floor Exercises**

Judges base their opinions on how well a gymnast combines motions in a rhythmic way. Skips, jumps, handsprings, and other movements must be combined in such a way as to make it look as if the routine is one continuous movement covering the entire floor space. Flexibility, balance, hold and strength, as well as creativity, are awarded points. Over-long runs, low height and other flaws in execution will result in points being deducted from the final score.

## Women's Asymmetrical Bar

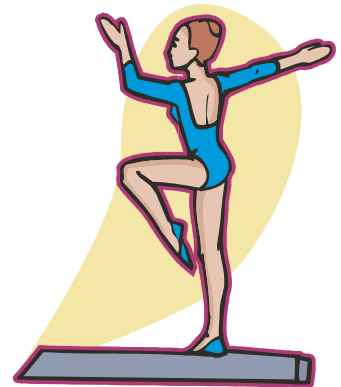
The routine done on the uneven bars must include constant motion. A gymnast is allowed only two momentary rests to regain balance. Judging is based on the passage of the body between the bars, the different hand grips on each bar, the suspension, and the degree of difficulty of the movements in the routine.

## Men's Horizontal Bar

The key to doing well in competition is to include at least one movement where both hands are taken off the bar. The bar then is grabbed again. Other crucial movements include the forward and backward giant swings, free hip circles and turns. The gymnast must be in constant motion for this entire routine to avoid losing points.

## Women's Balance Beam

The balance beam is sixteen and a half feet long and four inches wide. It tests a female athlete's balance as she performs jumps, leaps, turns, runs and walks across the entire length of the beam. The entire routine lasts between 80 and 105 seconds. Three short stops are allowed to regain balance. If the gymnast falls, she can start again within ten seconds.



## EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Equipment for gymnastics includes:

Parallel bars	Men's horizontal bar
Women's asymmetrical bar	Horse
Women's balance beam	Static rings

Clothing for gymnastics is usually form-fitting and flexible, such as leotards and gym suits. For major competitions, costumes are often worn.

## GYMNASTICS NOTES AND NEWS

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The popularity of gymnastics got a special boost in 1972, when Americans and Canadians alike fell in love with Olga Korbut, the tiny Russian champion. Then, in 1976,

when Nadia Comaneci scored a perfect 10 in the uneven parallel bars competition, even people who didn't know what parallel bars were knew perfection when they saw it. Follow these two with the warm, cheering, friendly smile of Mary Lou Retton in 1984 and you have a public that has come to love women's gymnastics.



But there is interest in men's gymnastics, too. The 1970s and 80s fitness craze in North America led to a heightened appreciation of physical conditioning, strength and endurance. Few athletes are better conditioned than gymnasts.

The rigorous competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympics produced these results:

### ***Men's Team***

Gold        China  
 Silver      Japan  
 Bronze     USA

### ***Women's Team***

Gold        China  
 Silver      USA  
 Bronze     Romania

### ***Men's Individual All-around***

Gold    YANG Wei                    China  
 Silver   UCHIMURA Kohei        Japan  
 Bronze   CARANOBE Benoit        France

### ***Women's Individual All-around***

LIUKIN Nastia              United States  
 JOHNSON Shawn          United States  
 YANG Yilin                 China

### ***Men's Floor Exercise***

Gold    ZOU Kai                      China  
 Silver   DEFERR Gervasio        Spain  
 Bronze   GOLOTSUTSKOV A.        Russian Fed.

### ***Women's Vault***

Gold    HONG Un Jong              DPR Korea  
 Silver   CHUSOVITINA O.          Germany  
 Bronze   CHENG Fei                    China

### ***Men's Pommel Horse***

Gold    XIAO Qin                     China  
 Silver   UDE Filip                    Croatia  
 Bronze   SMITH Louis                Great Britain

### ***Women's Floor Exercise***

Gold    IZBASA Sandra              Romania  
 Silver   JOHNSON Shawn            United States  
 Bronze   LIUKIN Nastia                United States



### ***Men's Rings***

Gold CHEN Yibing China  
Silver YANG Wei China  
Bronze VOROBIOV O. Ukraine

### ***Women's Un-even Bars***

Gold HE Kexin China  
Silver LIUKIN Nastia United States  
Bronze YANG Yilin China

### ***Men's Vault***

Gold BLANIK Leszek Poland  
Silver BOUHAIL Thomas France  
Bronze GOLOTSUTSKOV A. Russian Fed.

### ***Men's Parallel Bars***

Gold LI Xiaopeng China  
Silver YOO Wonchul Korea  
Bronze FOKIN Anton Uzbekistan

### ***Women's Beam***

Gold JOHNSON Shawn United States  
Silver LIUKIN Nastia United States  
Bronze CHENG Fei China

### ***Men's Horizontal Bar***

Gold ZOU Kai China  
Silver HORTON Jonathan USA  
Bronze HAMBUECHEN F. Germany

Also remember there are excellent gymnastic performances to watch on high school and collegiate levels.

In college competition, the 2007 Men's Gymnastics Championship ended with Oklahoma's Jonathan Horton taking home top honors on floor and Horizontal Bar, while California's Tim McNeill finished first in Pommel and Parallel Bars. Overall, Penn State won its twelfth team championship.



In the 2007 Women's Gymnastics Championship, Georgia's Courtney Kupets added to her team title with a victory in the vault, posting a score of 9.9188. Alabama's Morgan Dennis took first in the floor exercise with a score of 9.9625. Georgia won its eighth national title, moving to within one of Utah's record of nine during the 26 years of NCAA championships. Georgia is the first team to win three straight titles since Utah won the first five NCAA crowns from 1982-86.

Stay in touch with what is happening in gymnastics by visiting these web sites:

<http://www.ncaa.org>

<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/>

<http://www.gymn-forum.com>

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET

## GYMNASTICS

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### WHAT TO DO

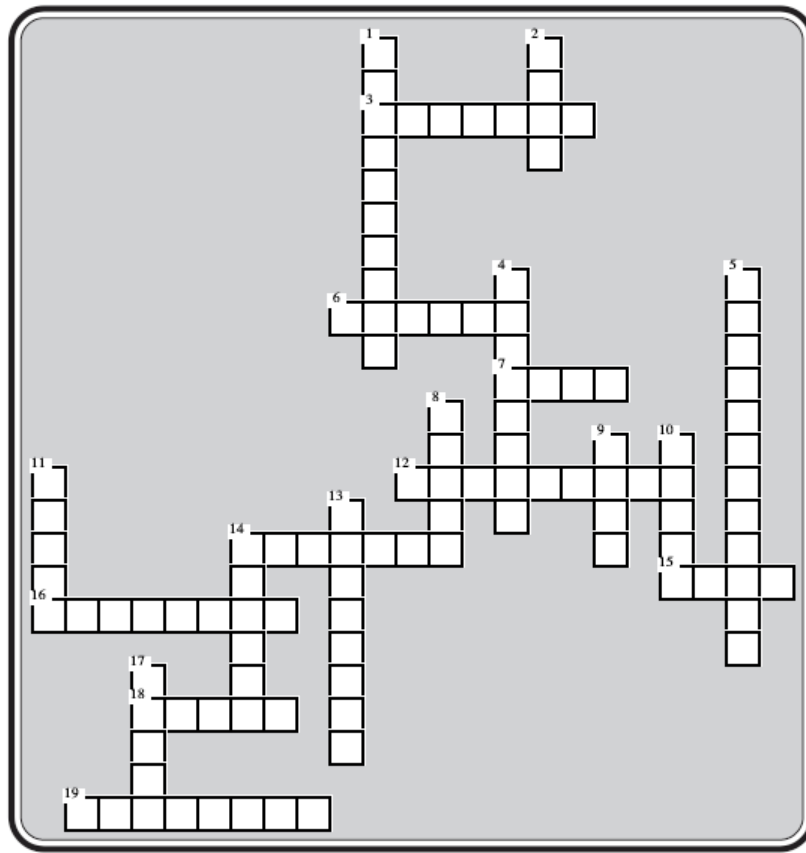
The following questions will help you to have a greater appreciation and understanding of gymnastics. Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, and write in complete sentences.

1. Why is gymnastics often considered to be the “purest” of all sports or athletic activities?
2. What are some of the physical benefits to be derived from participating in gymnastics?
3. What are the two types of gymnastics most commonly seen in competition and what is the difference between them?
4. Which countries now dominate the international gymnastics scene and why?



5. What is an “axis”? a “felge”? an “Arab spring”?
  
6. How would you execute a Hecht jump in a gymnastics competition?
  
7. Describe the vault exercise in women’s Olympic competitions. What do the terms “first flight” and “second flight” have to do with this exercise?
  
8. What are the criteria for judging the men’s floor exercises in men’s competitions?
  
9. What is the balance beam exercise test and how is it performed?
  
10. Why must gymnasts begin to train at a very early age?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Across:**

3. The inverted giant swing is called a \_\_\_\_\_ giant
6. Rhythmic gymnastics includes movement similar to this type of dance
7. Imaginary line around which the body rotates
12. On the rings, when the feet swing down to touch the floor
14. This beam is used in women's gymnastics
15. The back is rounded with the chin on the chest
16. A type of gymnastics
18. Standard position for doing exercises
19. Another type of gymnastics

**Down:**

1. The bar used in men's gymnastics
2. This spring is similar to a cartwheel
4. The legs are apart
5. The bars are not at the same height
8. When one hangs upside down on the parallel bars and rolls
9. Ludwig \_\_\_\_\_ was the founder of gymnastics
10. Jump from higher of two asymmetrical bars
11. Artistic gymnastics includes a \_\_\_\_\_ exercise
13. This has two sections - first and second flight
14. The body forms a wide back arch in a handstand
17. The straddle L position is called a \_\_\_\_\_ right angle

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Use the clues below to discover words in the above puzzle. Circle the words.

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