

General Gymnastics

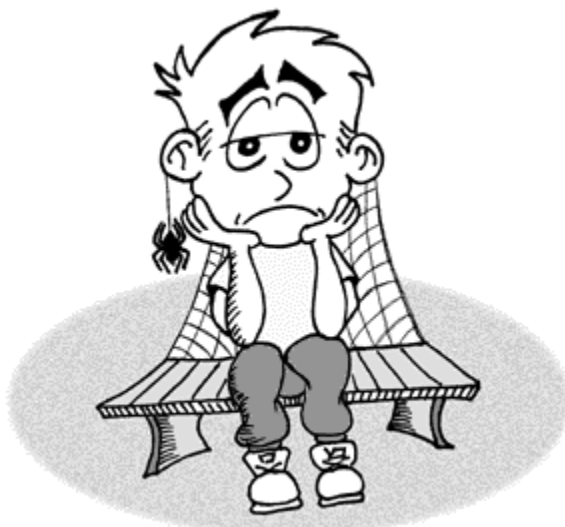
No One Sits on the Bench

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Why is General Gymnastics (GG) so popular and growing at such an astonishing rate?

As a parent from the GG club Half Moon Bay observed at the recent National GymFest in Orlando, “No one has to sit on the bench!” This is a sport activity in which everyone can participate, regardless of skill and age. In GG, both parents and their children can work out, perform and have fun together. A good display routine will utilize the best abilities of each member of the group to provide an entertaining routine. Most of all this is a fun sport activity! With events at amusement parks, local and national GymFests and the possibility to attend international events, there is always excitement and something to look forward to. How many sport activities can you participate in where you can participate in national and international events with one to two years of preparation?



How has GG changed our gym?

Three years ago being on the Fallbrook Competitive Team was the dream of most every gymnast in our gym, because they got to go places, do fun activities and receive recognition. Now, many of our competitive team members are green with envy since the Fallbrook Performance Team travels even more than the competitive team does—and to places that are more fun. In the past three years, the Fallbrook Performance Team has participated in three international events, five amusement park performances, three parades, three country fairs, three stadium appearances (in different stadiums), and performed at the Wild Animal Park and numerous street fairs. It seems that our Performance Team always has a big performance in preparation—this keeps everyone excited, motivated, and encourages them to maintain their enrollment at our club.

How do you bring this excitement to your program?

You can get going in GG by starting a performance class that is separate from your normal classes. We have found that most of our Performance Squad members continue their other recreational gymnastics classes and simply add-on the additional Performance Team practice. This makes sense as they continue to learn good gymnastics skills and execution in their regular classes while the Performance Team practices focus on preparation and rehearsals of the display routine(s). It is a good idea to start by scheduling a once-per-week Performance Squad class/practice at a time that is convenient for the group. If you are interested in involving parents in your group, the early evening is a good time.

How long is necessary? You will be amazed at how much progress the group will make during an hour and a half session conducted once a week over the course of your 8-10-12 week enrollment period! As a performance opportunity nears, we usually schedule some additional practice times.

Recruiting participants

Recruit participants from all parts of your gym programs (team, recreational, rhythmic, dance, karate and any other programs you offer). Additionally, you should go after potential performers who are not already enrolled in your programs, such as the parents, senior groups, cheer groups and others in your community who might enjoy this diverse activity and contribute to your routine(s) with their special skills.

Preparing your display routine(s)

After you have identified the GG participants for your Performance Squad/Team, plan routines that highlight their talents and special interests. At first, keep it simple. As the group masters the elements of the routine you can add complexity. Once the routine is looking good, perform it in the gym for your club members. You will find this to be a receptive (non-threatening) audience. The in-the-gym performance gives your group a goal to work towards, helps to “work out the kinks” and raises their confidence level. We also use these performances as an opportunity to recruit additional squad members—many in the audience will leave the performance saying to themselves, “Hey, this looks like fun! I can do that!”

Your first performances

After you have performed in your gym, it is time to move out and perform in your local community. Local fairs and community functions are a good place to start. If you are close to an amusement park they provide a great place to perform. Know your community—every town offers unique opportunities to perform. It is a good idea to plan and establish some performance opportunities prior to starting your Performance Squad. Having an established schedule is a great aid in your recruitment efforts. You will be able to tell them, “Here is our schedule of training/practice times and the schedule of performances that we have planned for your group.” As your GG program develops, you will be able to establish some longer term performance goals.

How do we learn more?

To learn more about GG, advance your technique and improve your choreography, you can attend local, regional and national GymFests. As the involvement and popularity of GG participation spreads, there are more and more opportunities. You and your group members will learn so much by attending GymFests! Here you not only get to perform, but you also get to watch other groups, talk with other coaches and group members, and participate in clinics and workshop sessions that are usually associated with the GymFests. This is an activity where the participants are willing to share their secrets! It is always the case at a National GymFest that there are educational classes held for coaches, participants and parents. During the past two National GymFests (Disneyland in 1996 and Walt Disney World in 1997), the attending international groups showed dynamic, high-level, and interesting routines. They were inspirational models for the USA groups by demonstrating

and sharing their interpretations of GG.

Do you need help in getting started?

There is help available!

Under General Gymnastics:

<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/Program.aspx?prog=g>

You will find a number of articles on GG, information about the National GymFest, minutes from the General Gymnastics Advisory Panel (GGAP), information about the World Gymnaestrada, and other GG activities and information.

- Call, fax, write, or email the USA Gymnastics National office to be added to the GG mailing list. You will begin to receive special mailings.

Phone: (317) 237-5050, ext. 236 (Steve Whitlock)

Fax: (317) 237-5069 (attn: Steve Whitlock)

Address: USA Gymnastics, GG
Pan American Plaza, Suite 300
201 S. Capitol Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46225

Email: gg@usa-gymnastics.org—this address is copied to ALL GGAP members

- You can call Dean Capelotti if you need a live voice to talk you through the process.
Phone: (760) 728-8582 —9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. PST week days

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