

Symbols for Judging Boy's Junior Program Exercises

by Doug Hills

What are the best steps for judging a compulsory routine?

- From the text At Floor Exercise the gymnast will begin
1. Run, Roundoff, back handspring
 2. Tucked back salto — salto at head height

To the performance



To the score **8.6**

The old way One way to work through the job of judging is to review the text, watch the exercise, take deductions and calculate the score. The judge's records may look like this:

+1	9.3
	-.7
+1	8.6

This is fine if the judge doesn't need to reconstruct the exercise or if there is a question about missing parts or bonus. The good thing about this method is speed. The downside is a lack of accountability. Athletes and coaches will need to know the details of your evaluation. Even at the end of a rotation this method makes this difficult; after a large meet it just isn't possible.

A better way As the gymnasts improve and the rules become more complex the task of good judging has become more demanding. This article offers a way to make judging better and more accountable and easier. The cost, for the judge, is the effort it takes to learn a symbol system. Fortunately, simplified symbols already exist. This system was developed by Mike Cook of Portland, Oregon. I have added some refinements of my own.

Start with one symbol A problem element for nearly all young gymnasts is a press to handstand. If you use just this one symbol the advantages for your judging start immediately. When you reconstruct the exercise you will know the deductions for the press, you know which deductions precede and follow the press; you have a memory jog to help you recall the rest of the exercise.

Refine a little A single underline, to indicate a momentary hold (1 second), will give you a record of the element and fulfillment of a momentary hold.



If the gymnast holds for a full two seconds, add another 1-second mark.



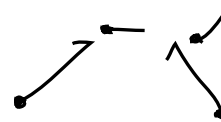
Refine a little more Suppose the gymnast takes two steps (a 0.2 general execution deduction at 0.1 per step). He also holds the handstand with a slight pike (a technical execution deduction, 0.1). Write general execution deductions below the symbol and technical (angle) deductions above the symbol. This is very useful information when you review the routine. Good symbols also give you cues that help you focus on what is important in the exercise.



Another good symbol Many of the required elements in the Junior Olympic program would be considered extra swings in FIG competition. On Rings, Parallel Bars and High Bar many of these swings must be performed to specific angle requirements.

This is a swing forward  This is a swing forward to horizontal 

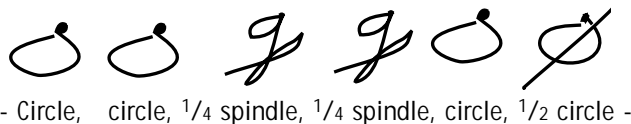
Swing variations Front swing to horizontal to a back swing 45° above horizontal - Remember, judging with these symbols requires some practice.



Now the parts of an exercise

On the mushroom - circle - 1/2 circle - quarter spindle - flair

Mushroom portion of Class 6 Pommel Horse



Notice how the symbols are easier to read than the text.

What makes a good symbol?

Symbols must take less time to write than the gymnast takes to perform the element. Simple lines and curves that represent the elements leave time to write deductions and bonus. Symbols should be easy to distinguish from deductions.

How to handle bonus

Each Class 6 and Class 5 exercise has a bonus alternative.



Bonus elements are indicated in square brackets, non-bonus elements in parentheses.



The real world

Here is a judged exercise:



The first thing that we see is that the gymnast has an extra circle (before the first spindle). Either this was an enthusiasm circle after struggling slightly with the first two or this gymnast has been practicing the Class 5 routine and got confused. He has general execution deductions (form problems) on the 1/4 spindles. There are body position deductions (probably piking) on the first circle and the first 1/4 spindle. He gets +0.2 specified bonus for the circle-flair-circle. The dismount is stuck. There is no bonus yet for the stick but there may be if there is also a stick in the pommel horse portion of the exercise. The mushroom portion of the exercise will receive a 3.4 score.

4.6	base
-0.5	extra element
-0.9	execution
+0.2	bonus
3.4	score

Advice to the gymnast: do the routine correctly (+0.5), clean up the spindles (+0.4), you can raise this part of your exercise to at least 4.3.

Floor examples

Remember, a mark to the left - backward, a mark to the right - forward, each mark from the top - 1/2 twist



Rings examples

If bonus depends on a spot, note the spot. Look at this portion of the Class 6 Rings compulsory.

The bonus for this exercise depends on performing the muscle-up without spot. Note the spot. Also, the requirement for 2 second holds in the support and the hanging-L are made clear with the double underline.



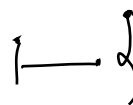
[] bonus

Handstands

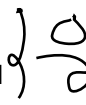
Pommel horse Developmental D - Handstand full turn



Rings Developmental D - Back uprise to handstand (hold)



Floor Class 7 dismount - Handstand, roll forward jump 1/1

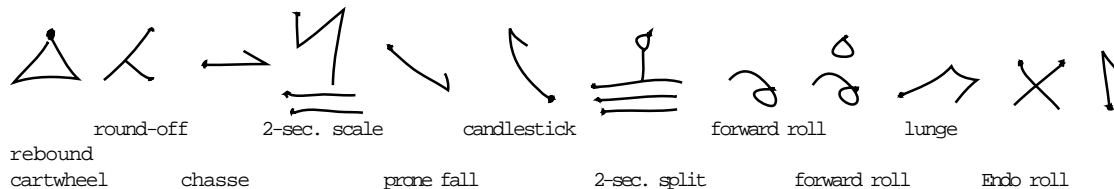


Be a better judge

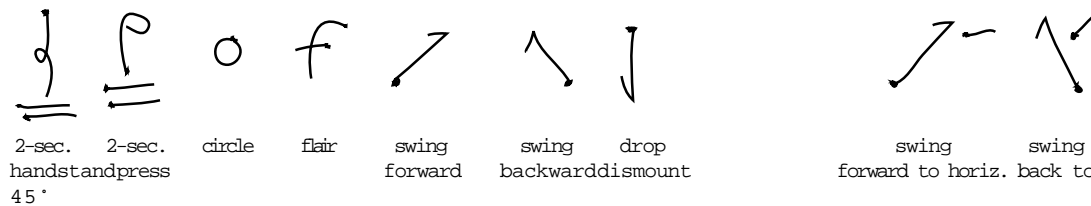
Gymnasts, coaches and judges are the three essentials that make up the sport of gymnastics. Gymnasts are the basis of it all. Coaches give us directed growth. Judges elevate gymnastics from an exhibition to a sport. What do you bring to this mix? Are you accurate? A good symbol system will help you focus on the judging task. Knowledgeable? A good symbols system will give you another cue for knowing the rules. Are you able to re-create your analysis of every routine? Are you able to defend a controversial score? Are you able to really help gymnasts who need your help? You will be able to do all these things better if you can effectively apply symbols.

LISTS OF USEFUL JUDGING SYMBOLS

More floor samples



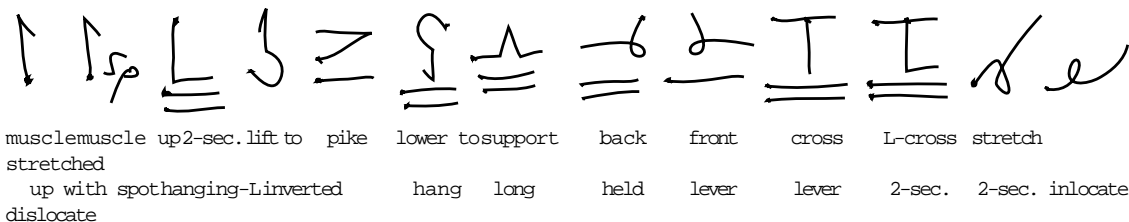
Some generic elements



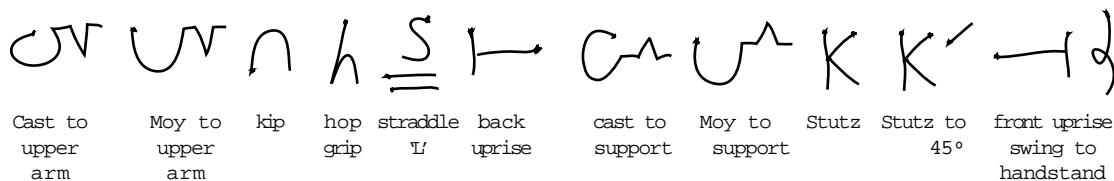
Pommel horse samples



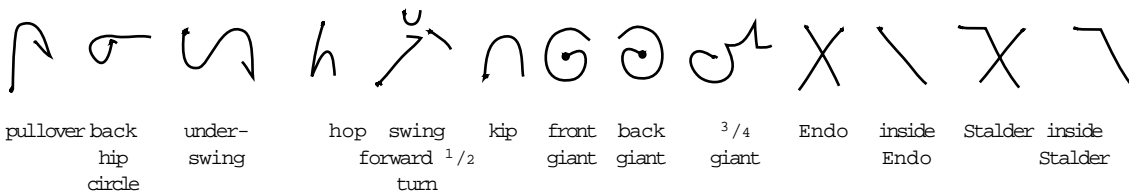
Rings samples



Parallel bar samples



High bar samples



Doug Hills is the author of the "Gymnastics Study Guide" software series and lives in Portland, Oregon. ■