Rhythmic Xcel Program Handbook
In Support of Grassroots Rhythmic Gymnastics

MISSION
1. To provide a program that makes rhythmic gymnastics easily accessible for new clubs, coaches, and athletes
2. To provide an alternative program for athletes seeking a more recreationally competitive experience
3. To bring the health benefits of rhythmic gymnastics to a wider audience

PHILOSOPHY
Kids who participate in sports like soccer and baseball are able to “play the game” after only a few practices. Kids who participate in gymnastics are asked to spend years in training before they can participate in a “game situation.” The Rhythmic Xcel program allows kids to have positive competitive experiences in an official USA Gymnastics setting with less training time required. The program also allows athletes to participate in rhythmic gymnastics while staying active in school and family activities.

The rules for Rhythmic Xcel have been laid out to put the focus on personal progress rather than competitive placement. Therefore athletes can be challenged and happy in a single level for multiple years. Clubs hosting events are required to follow the competition regulations for this purpose. Simple changes such as posting scores and naming event champions will ultimately undermine this goal.

BASIC PARTICIPATION INFORMATION
- Athletes must have a current USA Gymnastics Introductory or Athlete Membership.
- Athletes must turn 6 by the end of the calendar year to be eligible for competition.
- Coaches and Evaluators must be USA Gymnastics professional members.

ENTRY FEES
- Athletes may participate in a maximum of 3 individual apparatus events (Floor Exercise, Rope, Hoop, Ball, Clubs or Ribbon) and 2 group routines (this includes the Team FX Routine) at a single competition. Any combination of group and individual participation is allowed up to the maximum.
- Maximum Entry Fee is $20 per individual routine and $15 per athlete in each group routine (including the Team FX).
- Therefore, the Maximum TOTAL Entry Fee for any single athlete is ($20 x 3) + ($15 x 2) = $90.
- A TEAM FX Routine may include any number of athletes. The routine will be judged and receive achievement awards similar to group competition.
PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Individual and Group Routine competition will include 3 basic levels of participation with a fourth level for highly advanced individuals:

- **Level A** is for athletes who perform primarily JO and FIG .1 body skills. Apparatus handling is basic and less integrating with the body skills. Level A athletes are beginning level performers just getting used to performing in front of an audience.
- **Level B** is for athletes who perform primarily FIG .1 and .2 boy skills. Apparatus handling is slightly more complex and more integrated with body skills and choreography. Level B athletes are able to begin showing musicality and expression and can appeal to the audience with their performance.
- **Level C** is for athletes who perform primarily FIG .2 and .3 body skills. Apparatus handling is complex and integrated with body skills and choreography. Level C athletes are showing strong ability to deliver a packages performance.
- **NEW for Individual Competition Only - Level D** is for athletes who perform primarily FIG .3 body skills OR who create difficulty through skill combinations and variations. Apparatus handling is masterful and includes variety, risk and virtuosity. Level D athletes demonstrate a near professional level of performance ability.

ROUTINE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS (top half of score sheet)

Composition requirements are listed on the score sheets. Extra skills may be included in the composition of the routine, but will neither be counted for extra point nor penalized other than under general execution category if execution mistakes are made. Refer to USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic Program Technical Handbook for JO and FIG Body Difficulty table. Dance Steps description for Xcel is “a visible sequence of rhythmic dance steps”.

Individual Levels A, B, and C must include the following:

- 5 Body Skills with Apparatus Handling – one each Leap/Jump, Pivot, Balance plus one additional from two different categories.
- 1 Dance Steps with Apparatus Handling
- Apparatus Handling from each of the four basic handling groups.

Individual Level D (NEW) must include the following:

- 6 Body Skills OR Body Skill Series/Combinations (Series or Combination is defined as two or more body skills linked with minimal intermediate steps) with Apparatus Handling – at least one of each: Leap/Jump, Pivot, Balance AND a choice of 1 Dance Steps plus 2 additional skills OR 3 additional skills to meet the requirement of 6 total.
- Apparatus Handling from each of the four basic handling groups.

Individual FX (NEW) must include the following:

- 5 Body Skills (or Body Skill Series/Combinations for Level D) – one of each: Acro (any type of acrobatic skill is allowed, including in series or combination for Level D), Leap/Jump, Pivot, Balance plus one additional
- 1 Dance Steps

Group Apparatus Routines for Levels A, B, and C must include the following:

- 3 Body Skills with Apparatus Handling – one each Leap/Jump, Pivot, Balance performed synchronized or in canon.
• 2 Different Large Exchanges (at least 4 meters) – each using a different technique
• 1 Interaction/Collaboration with or without Acro

TEAM FX Routine (no levels) must include the following:
• 3 Body Skills – one each Leap/Jump, Pivot, Balance performed synchronized or in canon.
• 2 Interactions/Collaboration with or without Acro
• 1 Dance Steps performed synchronized

XCEL CATEGORIES (bottom half of score sheet)
Categories are described generally on the score sheet. Xcel categories are intended to encourage proper execution and performance ability.

• General Body Execution – includes basic posture, form and execution of torso, arms/hands, legs/feet and head.
• Apparatus Handling – strong basic technique and use of a variety of apparatus skills. Includes straight arms, exactness of planes, throw trajectories and clean catching technique.
• Choreography – routines should include interesting choreography including use of levels and space and integration of apparatus with body movement.
• Overall Impression – includes use of facial and body expression, musicality and crowd appeal.

Categories vary for Group and Floor Exercise routines.

• Group Execution – evaluating how the members of the group are able to synchronize choreography, find clear formations, and perform with unity of technique and expression.
• Body Expression (FX) – looking at the expressive movement of the body through waves and swings.
• Execution (FX) – checking for balanced work on both sides of the body.
• Choreography (Group) – additionally looking for interactions between the athletes.

TIME LIMITS
• Individual Routine maximum 1 minute 30 seconds
• Group Routine maximum 2 minutes 30 seconds
• Team FX Routines maximum 2 minutes 30 seconds

EVENT PROCEDURES
• Ceiling height and floor surface must be stated clearly in the initial competition information.
• Maximum entry fee is $20 per athlete per event/$15 per athlete per group routine.
• 1 judge per individual routine; 2 judges per group routine
• Organize rotations by grouping same level and apparatus routines together. Rotations with mixed levels are appropriate for smaller events, but must be organized for appropriate
• Coaches turn in completed score sheets at a designated time before the session. A designated secretary puts the sheets in order before the warm-up period to allow judges to review and familiarize with the score sheets.
• Coach or assistant should turn in music when the athlete is on deck and picked up immediately following the routine. An mp3 player may be left with the music production table, but the coach or assistant must confirm which music to play while the athlete is on deck.
• Scores are NOT flashed. A secretary is needed to add scores and enter into simple spreadsheet or handwritten log sheet.
• Achievement awards are prepared and presented within a timely manner at the end of the session.
• Score sheets are returned to the coaches following the session.
APPARATUS and ATTIRE

Rhythmic Xcel athletes should dress and present themselves in a professional manner which follows the foundations of rhythmic gymnastics. Creativity is encouraged but must not cross into the realm of costume or be distracting from the performance. Attire and hairstyle must not interfere with the proper handling of the apparatus or ability of the evaluators to see the body execution.

In addition, Rhythmic Xcel athletes must use proper rhythmic apparatus and should follow JO and FIG guidelines for size and weight requirements.

EVALUATORS

Evaluators (Judges) for the Rhythmic Xcel program are required to have a current USA Gymnastics Professional Membership. Evaluators are not required to have a current JO or FIG judging certification. Teams are encouraged to bring their own Judge (could be an assistant coach or retired athlete) to the event OR the meet director may ask the contracted judges to work the Rhythmic Xcel session. Payment is recommended to be $1 per routine judged.

SCORING and AWARDS

Scores are NOT flashed at any Xcel event.

Achievement Awards are required for ALL Rhythmic Xcel events. Individuals receive an award for each routine they presented. Each member of a group receives an award for each routine in which they participated, including a Team FX routine.

Achievement awards may be of any type, but must clearly show the distinction between award levels.

- 8.5 and up = FIRST level Achievement Award
- 7.0 to 8.4 = SECOND level Achievement Award
- Up to 6.9 = THIRD level Achievement Award