



Rhythmic Xcel Program Handbook

In support of Grassroots Rhythmic Gymnastics

MISSION

- To provide a program that makes rhythmic gymnastics easily accessible for gymnasts of all abilities, as well as new clubs, coaches, and choreographers.
- To provide a program for athletes seeking a recreational or developmentally educational competitive experience.
- To bring the health benefits of rhythmic gymnastics to a wide audience.

PHILOSOPHY

Rhythmic Xcel is designed to provide a competitive outlet for gymnasts just beginning in the sport, gymnasts who want to participate in a wide variety of extracurricular activities, gymnasts who desire to compete without the extensive time and financial commitments generally associated with the sport, and anyone who wants the opportunity to participate in a safe, fun sport that builds self esteem and physical fitness.

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 Athlete Membership.
- Coaches must be USA Gymnastics professional members.
- Evaluators must be USA Gymnastics professional members & at least 16 years old.
- Athletes must turn 6 by the end of the calendar year to be eligible for competition.

ENTRY FEES

- At a single competition, athletes may participate in a maximum of 3 individual events (Floor Exercise, Rope, Hoop, Ball, Clubs, or Ribbon) and 2 group routines (this includes the Team FX Routine). Any combination of group and individual participation is allowed up to the maximum.
- Maximum Entry Fee is \$25 per individual routine and \$20 per athlete in each group routine (including the Team FX).
- Therefore, the Maximum TOTAL Entry Fee for any single athlete in $(\$25 \times 3) + (\$20 \times 2) = \$115$.

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Individual Routine competition will include 4 basic levels of participation.

Level A is for athletes who perform primarily USAG Development Program and FIG .1 body skills. Apparatus handling is basic and less integrated 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 body 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 packaged performance.

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.

INDIVIDUAL ROUTINE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS

- Maximum time: 1:30
- Music for any/all routines may be instrumental or have family friendly lyrics.
- Composition requirements for each level are listed below. Extra skills may be included in the composition of the routine, but will neither be counted for extra points nor penalized other than under general execution category for mistakes or other errors.
- The definition of Dance Steps for Xcel is “a visible sequence of rhythmic dance steps.”
- Acro skills include rolls, cartwheels, walkovers and their variations. Acro skills with flight are allowed.
- COACHES are RESPONSIBLE for properly filling out the score sheets, writing down the skills in the order they are performed in the routine.
- COACHES are also RESPONSIBLE to refer to USAG Development Program Technical Handbook and/or FIG Body Difficulty table for proper selection of skills for the level. No bonus or deduction will be taken directly for skills above or below the suggested level. Only the execution of the skills is to be judged by the Skill List panel.

LEVELS A & B INDIVIDUAL ROUTINES

FLOOR EXERCISE must include the following:

- 6 Body Elements
 - 1 Pivot
 - 1 Balance
 - 1 Jump/Leap
 - 1 Dance Steps
 - 1 Body Wave
 - 1 Skill of Choice – May be an acro

APPARATUS ROUTINES must include the following:

- 5 Body Elements (Body Elements will only receive credit if the apparatus is in motion or ball – held on the palm of the hand)
 - 1 Pivot
 - 1 Balance
 - 1 Jump/Leap
 - 1 Dance Steps
 - 1 Body Wave
- 4 different handlings (See Apparatus Technical Groups Chart) – Gymnasts should include one occurrence of each handling, appropriately chosen for their level. The 4 different handlings can be anywhere in the routine, not necessarily on the Body Elements in the Skill List.

LEVELS C & D INDIVIDUAL ROUTINES

FLOOR EXERCISE must include the following:

- 10 Body Elements
 - 2 Pivots
 - 2 Balances
 - 2 Jumps/Leaps
 - 2 Dance Steps
 - 2 Skills of choice – May be across
 - NOTE – Body Elements may be performed in series or combination, but are judged as individual skills by the ROUTINE COMPOSITION panel.

APPARATUS ROUTINES must include the following:

- 8 Body Elements (Body Elements will only receive credit if the apparatus is in motion or ball – held on the palm of the hand)
 - 1 Pivot
 - 1 Balance
 - 1 Jump/Leap
 - 2 Dance Steps
 - 3 Skills of choice – May be across
- 4 different handlings (See Apparatus Technical Groups Chart) – Gymnasts should include one occurrence of each handling, appropriately chosen for their level. The 4 different handlings can be anywhere in the routine, not necessarily on the Body Elements in the Skill List.
- 2 medium/high throws (must be caught for credit)
 - Level D – required 1 of the throws be with rotation, around any axis and on any phase of the throw.

GROUP ROUTINE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS

TEAM FLOOR EXERCISE

Maximum time: 2:30

- May include any number of athletes, any level.
- Music may be instrumental or have family friendly lyrics.
- Skills should reflect the level of the athletes in the group. The level of the skills will neither be counted for extra points nor penalized other than under general execution category for mistakes or other errors.
- The routine will be judged and receive achievement awards.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TEAM FLOOR EXERCISE

- 3 Body Elements (must be synchronized or in canon to receive credit)
 - 1 Pivot
 - 1 Balance
 - 1 Jump/Leap
- 2 Interactions/Collaborations
- 1 Dance Sequence

GROUP APPARATUS ROUTINES

Maximum time: 2:30

- May include 2-10 gymnasts
- Music may be instrumental or have family friendly lyrics

- Any apparatus, or combination of apparatus

LEVELS A & B GROUP APPARATUS ROUTINES must include the following:

- 1 Pivot with handling
- 1 Balance with handling
- 1 Jump/Leap with handling
- 1 Exchange
- 1 Interaction/Collaboration
- 1 Dance Sequence

LEVELS C & D GROUP APPARATUS ROUTINES must include the following:

- 1 Pivot with handling
- 1 Balance with handling
- 1 Jump/Leap with handling
- 2 Additional Body Elements with handling
- 2 Large Exchanges (at least 4 meters) – each using a different technique
- 2 Interactions/Collaborations
- 1 Dance Sequence

EVENT PROCEDURES

- Ceiling height and floor surface must be stated clearly in the initial competition information.
- Minimum two (2) judges per athlete or group recommended for regional or national competitions. One judge is appropriate for local or state meets.
- Organize rotations by grouping same level and apparatus routines together. Rotations with mixed levels are appropriate, but must be organized properly so that all routines using the same apparatus within the same level are judged by the same evaluator(s).
- Coaches are required to turn in fully completed score sheets at least 24 hours before the competition, unless otherwise stated by the meet director. Score sheets must be in order and ready for judges to review at least one hour prior to the competitive session.
- Coaches are required to follow the rules of the meet director when turning in music. Meet director must have ability to plug in a device at the competition. Coaches are required to operate their own music device for the competition unless the music coordinator states otherwise.
- Scores are NOT to be flashed during Xcel competitions. A secretary should sit with the evaluators to tally scores and enter into a spreadsheet. An Xcel committee member or veteran Xcel evaluator must review the spreadsheet BEFORE awards are prepared and reserves the right to curve the final results to ensure that the distribution of achievement awards is appropriate for the session. Refer to the **Rhythmic Xcel Evaluator Scoring** section for more information.
- Achievement awards are to be presented within a timely manner at the end of each session.
- Score sheets may be returned to the coaches following the session.
- Minimum payment is \$1 per routine judged per evaluator. Reimbursement for travel expenses should follow USAG Development Program Rules.

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 athletic 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 USAG Development Program and FIG guidelines for size and weight requirements.

AWARDS

Achievement awards are given for each individual routine and to each member of a group for each routine performed. Additional awards may be given at the discretion of the meet director, but may not replace the basic achievement awards.

Achievement awards may be of any type, but must clearly show distinction between the award levels according to the following guidelines:

Individual Levels A & B and ALL Group Levels

- 85 and up = FIRST LEVEL (GOLD) Achievement Award
- 70 to 84 = SECOND LEVEL (SILVER) Achievement Award
- Up to 69 = THIRD LEVEL (BRONZE) Achievement Award

Refer to the **Rhythmic Xcel Evaluator Scoring** section for information on running the awards ceremony.

Rhythmic Xcel Evaluator Scoring

EVALUATING GROUP & INDIVIDUAL ROUTINES

Xcel welcomes performers with a full spectrum of natural abilities in regards to flexibility as well as body types and structures. Considering this, routines should be evaluated on quality of technique and performance.

Standards should be judged according to each level. The size of the gymnast & length of routine should be considered when awarding points for use of floor.

There are 2 parts to the score sheets: One evaluator can complete the entire score sheet, or one evaluator can do the top half and another evaluator can do the bottom half.

Global Deductions are taken off the total calculated score when an athlete has made large mistakes in her routine. These would be mistakes that are not taken into account by any of the specified evaluation categories. Global deductions of 1.0-3.0 may be taken for the following types of large mistakes. A maximum of 3.0 can be deducted for each category. Partial points may be awarded. Global deductions apply only to individual routines.

- Falls or big stumbles
- Forgetting the routine or needing help from coach (Level C/D)
- Going out of bounds

INDIVIDUAL ROUTINES

Individual routines are divided by level. The skill values for each level are suggested, not required. For example, a Level C may perform FIG 0.1 skills and receive credit. However, execution being comparable, the Overall Impression for this gymnast should be lower than for a gymnast in her level who performs all FIG 0.2 & 0.3 skills.

LEVELS A/B APPARATUS & RFX and Level C/D RFX

- Element List - Refer to the section below for the point breakdown for each element and the appropriate values to be awarded. Partial points may be awarded.
- XCEL Performance and General Execution Categories
 - Categories are described and broken down on the score sheet. GENERAL EXECUTION CATEGORIES are intended to encourage proper body preparation, physical readiness, and complete apparatus handling ability for the selected level of participation. XCEL PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES are designed to draw awareness and reward performance ability and mastery within each level. Refer to the score sheets for specific values.
 - The evaluator who completes this portion of the score sheet is responsible for determining that the gymnast included 4 different handlings in the apparatus routines.

LEVEL C/D APPARATUS - See above for specifics on each category

- Body Element List – Includes General Execution for Body Elements
- Apparatus Skill List – Includes General Execution for Apparatus Skills and XCEL Performance Categories

ELEMENT LIST

*Use the scale below to determine the points to award for Body Elements: pivots, balances, leaps/jumps, dance steps, & acros. Partial points may be awarded. **Body Elements will only receive credit if the apparatus is in motion or ball – held on the palm of the hand.***

A/B

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 10 | Skill very nicely executed, toes pointed, knees straight, proper technique. |
| 8 – 9 | Toes and knees are not in line, but skill was properly executed. |
| 6 – 7 | Toes/knees not in line, basic form of the body skill not shown (not held long enough in a balance, insufficient rotations in a pivot, etc.). |
| 4 – 5 | Attempted skill, but needs work. |
| 1 – 3 | Attempted skill, but many/serious mistakes. |
| 0 | Did not attempt skill/Apparatus not in motion. |

C/D

- 5 Skill very nicely executed, toes pointed, knees straight, proper technique.
- 4 Toes and knees are not in line, but skill was properly executed.
- 3 Toes/knees not in line, basic form of the body skill not shown (not held long enough in a balance, insufficient rotations in a pivot, etc.).
- 2 Attempted skill, but needs work.
- 1 Attempted skill, but many/serious mistakes.
- 0 Did not attempt skill/Apparatus not in motion.

GROUP ROUTINES

The Team Floor Exercise is not divided by level, so Body Elements of any value may be performed. Skills should be appropriate for the level of the gymnasts in the group.

The Group Apparatus routines are divided by level. As in Individual, the skill values for each level are suggested, not required. Body Elements will only receive credit if the apparatus is in motion or ball – held on the palm of the hand. Partial points may be awarded.

TEAM FX & A/B GROUP APPARATUS

- 10 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance very nicely executed by all members of the group: toes pointed, knees straight, proper technique, no drops.
- 8 – 9 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance was properly executed by the majority of the group: 1-2 drops.
- 6 – 7 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance performed with mistakes by the majority of the group: basic form of the body skill not shown (not held long enough in a balance, insufficient rotations in a pivot, etc), drops by several members of the group.
- 4 – 5 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance attempted, but needs work.
- 1 – 3 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance attempted, but many/serious mistakes.
- 0 Did not attempt Skill/Apparatus not in motion.

C/D GROUP APPARATUS

- 6 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance very nicely executed by all members of the group: toes pointed, knees straight, proper technique, no drops.
- 5 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance was properly executed by the majority of the group: 1-2 drops.

- 3 - 4 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance performed with mistakes by the majority of the group: basic form of the body skill not shown (not held long enough in a balance, insufficient rotations in a pivot, etc), drops by several members of the group.
- 2 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance attempted, but needs work.
- 1 Skill/Exchange/Collaboration/Dance attempted, but many/serious mistakes.
- 0 Did not attempt Skill/Apparatus not in motion.

Rhythmic Xcel Program - Overall Philosophy for Evaluating Routines

ALL athletes participating in the Rhythmic Xcel program deserve to have a positive competitive experience. When our evaluations reflect accurately what each athlete actually did with regard to his or her personal attributes, then we will be teaching the principles of hard work and progressive improvement...thus instilling self-confidence and self-motivation in ALL.

Things to Keep in Mind

Point #1

The Xcel evaluation system is set up to REWARD and ACKNOWLEDGE athletes who PERFORM a routine with PROPER EXECUTION of skills and with CORRECT BODY and APPARATUS technique.

A) Exact degrees of splits or turns or height of legs in balances are NOT part of the criteria for awarding points. *Any leap done with proper straight legs, pointed toes, upper body positioning, arm and apparatus control should receive a full 1.0 regardless of the degree of the split.* (See Body Elements guidelines for more description.

B) Athletes participating in higher levels that choose simple body elements, but perform them flawlessly and with great integration of the apparatus, CAN and SHOULD score higher than same level athletes who choose more difficult skills but have consistent execution errors.

Point #2

The Xcel program is a perfect example of how a competitive program can reward effort and personal achievement, while providing a positive competitive experience for both the athlete and her parents. Every event will have some athletes who perform better than others, and the award spread should reflect that.

At the Competitions:

A) Xcel evaluators must understand and review the Xcel philosophy and be willing to work within the scope of the program. An Xcel committee member or Xcel veteran evaluator should be in attendance and meet with the evaluators before the event to establish and review how to use the score sheets.

B) The Xcel meet director has the right to CURVE the final scores in the event a panel has skewed the scores down. Not every event may have GOLD level achieving routines, but there should be a natural spread of Gold, Silver, and Bronze for each apparatus when a good number of athletes are participating. Utilizing an Xcel veteran as a meet referee to check the initial incoming scores can help eliminate the need to curve scores.

Point #3

The awards ceremony is very important to the parents of the athletes. When sessions include different levels of Xcel athletes, the audience often has no idea that the athletes they are watching are in different levels. Spectators also often do not understand that every gymnast achieves success, and is in competition with only herself. Gymnasts are not ranked, so there is not one “winner”. We are in the business of educating the general public about the importance of self-development, and our awards ceremonies are an INCREDIBLE opportunity for us to have a profound effect.

With this in mind, we suggest the following format for ALL Xcel awards ceremonies...

- A) Begin with One Event.
- B) Announce which participation level is being awarded (A thru D).
- C) Announce the athletes who achieved the BRONZE level (by true or curved scoring) and present their awards.
- D) Announce the athletes who achieved the SILVER level and present the awards.
- E) Announce the athletes who achieved the GOLD level and present the awards.
- F) All athletes who competed in the apparatus event remaining standing together with their awards.
- G) Continue through each event and for each participation level.

This system allows the audience and the athletes to recognize and congratulate the performers who did a superb job and stood out for the day.

Point #4

Athletes who are entered in a competition as USAG Development Program competitors MAY NOT also participate in the same competition as Xcel participants. The Xcel program can be an important training tool to develop confidence in athletes training for higher levels of competition. Doubling up in the same competition will only take away space from other potential participants and will not be allowed.

Point #5

When judging athletes with special needs, either in the HUGS division or those who have worked up into the Xcel levels, the exact same criteria for execution and presentation is in effect. Each athlete should be judged based on body and apparatus execution at the level that has been designated for participation.

Point #6

The purpose of participating in the Xcel program is the same for everyone – to be evaluated by a system that rewards proficiency and points out areas that can be improved. Our goal is to help every participant get closer to their unique personal potential through compassionate and proper feedback and education. Gymnasts should leave Xcel competitions, smiling, with good self-esteem, and a feeling of being rewarded for their performance on that day! Parents should leave Xcel competitions smiling, with an understanding of the award system, knowing that they have chosen the perfect sport for their children to keep them physically and emotionally healthy.

QUESTIONS? Contact the Rhythmic Xcel Technical Committee:

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