

# Conditioning From Gym To Home To Gym

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In the beginning, and throughout the training process, conditioning is the easiest way to get the body physically ready for sport. Conditioning helps to develop the body alignment. This process will aid the body in how to curve, stand straight, and flip. If gymnasts concentrate on how they are doing the exercise, they will develop the most important aspects of the sport—feeling and memory of muscle.

Athletes should always do conditioning the correct way and try to put 100% effort into conditioning both at home and at the gym. When an athlete gives less than 100% she is only hurting her own performance and extending the time it will take to get stronger for skills in gymnastics.

Sometimes during the training process there may not be enough time to do everything that the coach has planned. The coach must fit in conditioning, flexibility, perfecting skills, and learning new skills and routines. So it's important to practice at home in order to continue to improve. Conditioning and flexibility are perfect things for gymnasts to practice at home. Of course, gymnastics skills should be done only under coach supervision at the gym!

There are two types of conditioning and all levels of gymnasts need both types!

1. **Conditioning for health and fitness.** This is when you are making your body, including muscles, lungs, heart, etc. stronger.
2. **Sport specific conditioning.** This is when you develop memory and feeling in the muscles for performing your sport.

For example:

The coach asks his gymnast to do 10 bent knee sit ups. If the gymnast is not bending her knees enough, her bottom is far away from her heels and she is not bringing her chest closer to her knees then she is doing fitness conditioning and is getting stronger but is not performing sport specific conditioning. But if the gymnast pays close attention to body position: bending knees with heels close to bottom, bending high enough with chest going to knees, and has a slightly hollow position, then she is performing sport specific conditioning. In other words, she is learning how to somersault without doing a somersault. Also when she adds another variation such as a turn/twist at the top of the sit up (left and right), then she is developing how to flip with a twist!

To make conditioning at home more appealing, an athlete may want to develop her own plan (when she will condition and how long). At home a gymnast has two options:

1. Use a single exercise a day
2. Design a circuit by mixing exercises. For example: 10 sit ups, 10 push ups, 10 arch ups and repeat the circle from the beginning. Do this circuit two or three times or as recommended by your coach. Other exercises can be added to the circuit.

## Progressions for the Sit Up

1. **Sit ups with bent knees.**



- a. Bottom to your heels as close as you can.
- b. Hands together behind your head.
- c. Elbows forward.
- d. Hollow in the chest.
- e. Back on the floor (there should not be any space/holes between your back and the floor).
- f. The sit ups should be like a roll up. You should roll all the way up until your chest touches your knees. On the way down you unroll. For example: Imagine yourself rolling up a newspaper and then unrolling it.
- g. On the way up...you go fast!



- h. On the way down...you go slow!



There should not be any sound as you reach the floor. Do not drop to the floor.

- i. When this exercise becomes easy you will need to increase speed and repetition.
- j. A variation to this exercise can be added to the roll down. A hollow hold with bent knees. At the end of the roll down the athlete can stop/pause and hold the body close to the ground. The back should not touch the ground. First you can do this with bent arms. Then you can try with straight arms. Stretch tall making sure there are no holes between the neck, head and arms.



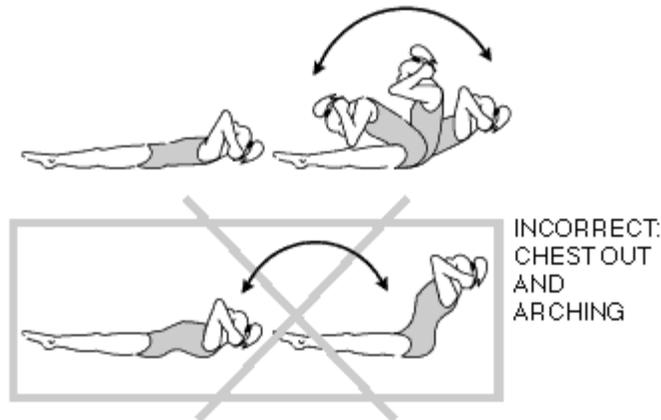
## 2. Sit ups with straight legs.

You may try sit ups with straight legs only when bent knee sit ups are:

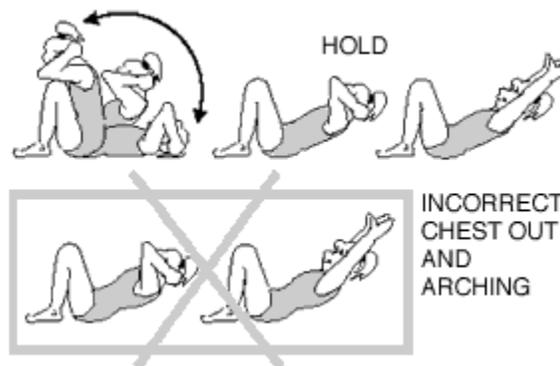
- Very easy in large numbers.
- Done with nice form.
- The variations are easy.
- The coach recommends them.



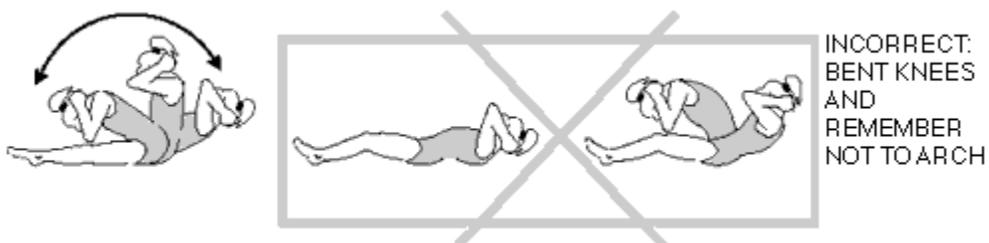
- a. You would follow the same steps listed for bent knee sit ups.
- b. It is important to make sure you do not arch in the lower back. Do not drop on the floor.



- c. Once again picture yourself rolling up and rolling back down. If you drop you are not strong enough for this exercise and you need to continue to work with your bent knee sit ups.



- d. As in the bent knee, you can add to the roll down a slight hollow hold (like a banana).
- o Bent arms behind head.
  - o Straight arms stretching tall.
- e. When doing straight leg sit ups it is just as important for you to pay attention to how nice you squeeze your legs together (tight, together, and straight).

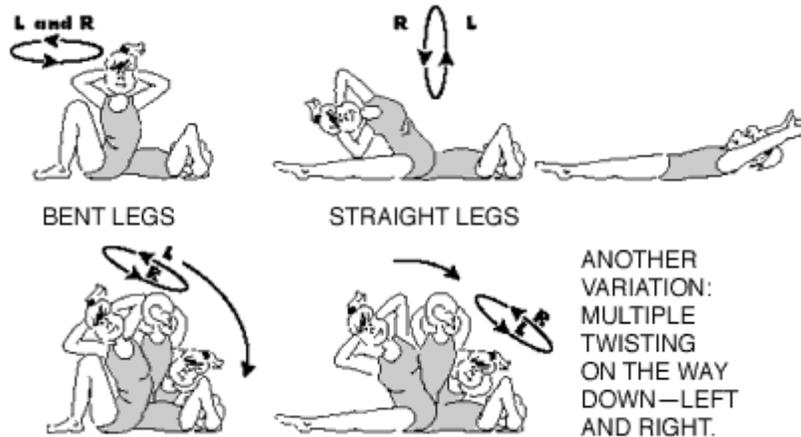


- Helps for future tumbling.
- Helps on the bars: front and back giants, especially on the tap swing—where speed is increased. If there is not enough strength and flexibility, athletes tend to bend their knees here. The next exercise, sit ups on a block, is a more advanced exercise and will cover the stretch in the hips.

### 3. Twist/Turn Sit Ups

Both bent knee and straight leg sit ups can be done with a turn/twist at the top of the sit up. Remember to follow the steps above for bent knee sit ups.

- Do not arch on the way up and down.
- Roll and unroll.
- The twist/turn is done at the end/top of the sit up. Then roll down.



#### 4. Twist/turn in the hollow position (left and right)

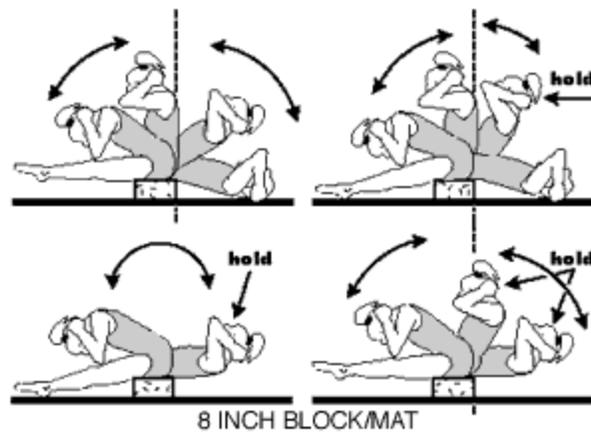
When hollow holds become easy, you can add a twist/turn in the hollow hold position (left and right). It is important to hold the body in this hollow position and do not arch in the lower back or chest.



#### 5. Sit Ups on a block/mat

This next conditioning exercise you can try on an 8 inch block/mat. The block/mat must be firm under your bottom. This is the most advanced sit up and should be done at the gym under your coach's supervision only when you are strong enough.

- When you are sitting at the edge of the mat/block your bottom should not hang over the side. There should be a vertical line.
- Follow the steps for doing sit ups.
- This is still a roll up and roll down exercise.
- This type of sit up is one exercise that will stretch the hips and it develops a bigger range of motion. For example: A front handspring front somersault.
- The hollow hold can be added to this exercise. The hold should be done on the horizontal or a little higher. The hips should be flat without any angles.



## 6. V Seat Sit Ups

1. Lay down straight on the floor. The lower back should be on the floor.
2. Your arms should be stretching tall on the floor without any holes between your arms and head.
3. When you begin the exercise be sure to keep the arms stretching behind the ears.
4. The body should fold in half at the same time, like a book in your hand would fold.
5. At the end of the sit up you should be reaching past your toes with your head, chest, and stomach close to the legs.
6. This exercise should be done quickly up and quickly down.
7. At the end of the required numbers, you should hold the last V Seat in the closed position for 10 seconds.
8. This exercise should also be done quietly. No noise and no drops.



Sit Ups	Holds
10 x (up to 10)	10 seconds up to 10
15 x (up to 10)	15 seconds up to 10
20 x (up to 10)	20 seconds up to 8
25 x (up to 8)	25 seconds up to 6
30 x (up to 6)	30 seconds up to 5
50 x (up to 3)	40 seconds up to 3
100 x (up to 2)	60 seconds up to 2
100 x 1	60 seconds up to 1

Numbers and repetitions depend on what your training needs are:

1. Dynamic: Motion
2. Static: Hold
3. Combination

