Parent/Child CLASS: Partner

Up!

By Linda Thorberg
TAGS GYMNASICS, MN
USA Gymnastics National HOT Instructor

Teaching Gymnastics to two-year-olds and parents can be challenging and uncomfortable for unprepared staff at your gym. A parent/child class is often the last choice of levels to teach for many because of the “parent factor.” For those who do teach parent participation classes, it can be extremely fun and rewarding. This article will provide a basic guide and ideas to follow for successful classes.

At TAGS, our parent/child classes are “buddy” classes. The parent is the safety net during class and all activities are “hands on.” Our goal is to expose the parent to this fun time with their child where they can truly interact in special activities. The more things we do with the parent holding on to the child, the more involvement the parents have, and the easier to teach. Teaching the parents to play with their children in an appropriate way is a major benefit for the parents. The teachers should not try to pry the children away from their parents. Instead, the goal should continue on p.8
be interaction between the parent and child, not separation. There are times, like on trampoline, when safety must come first and the children will need to go one at a time with the teacher. But the majority of class time should be spent with the parent and child together. When the children move on to a class without parent assistance, we hope the parents have great memories of their time in class together.

Partner Up Activities For Parent/Child Class

**BLAST-OFF, ROLL OVER!**
This is a way to learn safety falls and rolls. The parent lifts the child up by holding under the arms (Blast off), tells them to land on a target on their feet, and then do a forward roll. The child will eventually learn that they should land on their feet when coming down from a height and roll over if off balance. Varieties of this action can also be done:

**TWIRL AND ROLL** – Hold under armpits, twirl in a circle (get a little bit dizzy), land and roll.

**SUPERMAN RIDE** – Lift them while they balance on their tummy and fly around the room, come back to target to land and roll.

**TICK TOCK** – Lift under arms, swing side to side, land on target and roll.

**CATERPILLAR**
A fun, cooperative game of crawling across the floor. The parent holds the child’s legs or ankles and they crawl across the floor as one unit. Then change places!

**JACK BE NIMBLE**
Hold arms or torso and jump over parent’s legs. Jump over one or two legs at a time. Change places!

**TUCK, PIKE, STRADDLE LEGS**
Manipulate the child's legs into the correct position. Then see if they can do it alone. When you do straddle, say “Peek a Boo.”

**WHEELBARROW WALK**
The parent holds the child’s hips while he/she walks on hands to an object. It’s a great upper body strength game.

**ROW YOUR BOAT**
Everyone knows the song! Parent and child sit in straddle position, facing each other, hold hands and lean forward and backward, singing the song. Focus on keeping the knees facing up, but don’t worry too much about straight legs at this point.

**PARTNER LOG ROLL**
Parent and child lay on the floor facing each other. Hold hands and roll sideways together. It is fun, but you need a lot of room.

Use your imagination!
There are many more activities to try. Pick several to do during each class to get the parents involved in a fun way.