

Understanding Competitive Gymnastics

A Guide for Parents

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Competitive Program Options

All members of the TNT Dynamite Team participate and compete in the USA Gymnastics (**USAG**) Women's Xcel Program. It is the USAG's responsibility to oversee the competitive structure, along with its rules and regulations, for the athletes that represent our country in international competitions. Included in this responsibility is the developmental and age group programs that direct our gymnasts from the beginning stages.

Compulsory Vs. Optional

The athletes compete in either **compulsory** or **optional** exercises or both. The compulsory routines are developed with varying levels of difficulty so the athletes use the compulsories to develop their skills progressively. Optional routines are choreographed (put together) by the gymnast and the coach. Optional routines are usually unique to each particular gymnast while compulsories are performed by all gymnasts in much the same manner. Scoring for compulsories and optionals is similar except that the gymnast must follow a prescribed sequence of skills in compulsories.

USAG Junior Olympic Program

There are 11 levels to the USAG Women's Junior Olympic Program. Levels 1 and 2 are non-competitive levels. The girls start with competing at Level 3 and go up to Level 10. Levels 3, 4, 5, and 6 are compulsory levels. Levels 8, 9, and 10 are optional levels. Level 7 is an optional level with certain compulsory skills required on each event. The Elite Level is for athletes beyond Level 10.

Levels 3 and 4.

The first competitive level is **Level 3**. It consists entirely of compulsory routines. Compulsory routines are a pre-choreographed series of skills that each competitor must perform. Once again, they are made up of core skills needed for each event, built on the skills from a previous level. The philosophy of these routines is for the athletes to practice toward perfection of these basics. The minimum age for this level is 6 and there is no maximum age. The athletes are arranged in age groups at competitions. **Level 4** is a continuation of development of fundamental skills acquired in Level 3. Athletes do not need to compete in Level 3 to compete in Level 4. Levels 3 and 4 do not use the vault table for their vaults, perform their uneven bars routine only on the low bar, and only use part of the floor area for their floor exercise.

Levels 5 and 6

Levels 5 and 6 are also a compulsory only level of competition. Each level builds on the skills of the previous level and likewise is judged with higher expectations. The USAG structure is based on a progressive "step by step" building of physical, emotional and psychological skills. Proficiency of all aspects of the gymnast at each level is expected and required to insure a safe smooth movement through the levels. The minimum age for this level of competition is 7. Athletes do not need prior competition at Level 4 to compete at Level 5.

Levels 7-10 and Beyond

Level 7 is a stepping stone level. It bridges the gap between the all-compulsory levels of 5 and 6 and the all optional level of 8. The gymnasts have required skills that can be put together in an optional routine. **Level 8** is the first level of all optional competition. Optional competition consists of each gymnast performing her own routines for each event. The Federation of International Gymnastics (**FIG**) produces the optional rules every 4 years in conjunction with the Olympics. This book (**Code of Points**) dictates what each routine must contain (composition), the value of what is done (difficulty), and how to evaluate how well it is done (execution). There are three optional only levels: 8,9,10. The minimum age for level 8 is 8 years old, while for levels 9 and 10, it is 9 years of age. **Level 9** is the second level of optional competition. Its difficulty requirements and expectations are accordingly more difficult than at level 8. Reaching

Level 9 is a significant achievement for a gymnast. **Level 10** is considered a Pre-Elite Level and for the truly dedicated and motivated gymnast. **Elite** is the 11th level of competition. Like Level 10 it is for the truly dedicated athletes. The Elite level is broken up into 2 categories, **NATIONAL** and **INTERNATIONAL**. Children and Jr. National Elites compete in skill testing and optional routines. Jr. International and Sr International compete optional only. It is from the INTERNATIONAL rank that our **Olympic** and **World Championship** teams are chosen.

USAG Xcel Program

There are 5 levels to the USAG Xcel Program. The Xcel Program is designed to offer a broad-based, affordable competitive experience outside the traditional Jr. Olympic Program to attract and retain a diverse group of athletes. All routines in this program are optional routines.

Bronze: The minimum age requirement for the Bronze division is 5 years old. (This means the gymnast must be 5 before she competes in her first meet.) The Bronze division is similar in skill requirements to the JO Program's levels 1-2.

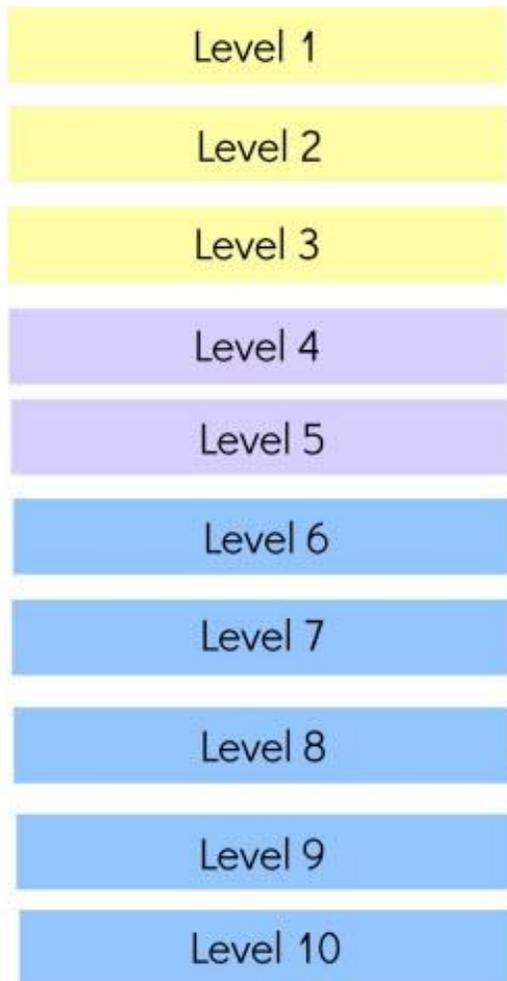
Silver: The minimum age requirement for the Silver division is 6 years old. (This means the gymnast must be 6 before she competes in her first meet.) The silver division is similar in skill requirements to the JO Program's level 3 and 4.

Gold: The minimum age requirement for the Gold division is 7 years old. (This means the gymnast must be 7 before she competes in her first meet.) The gold division is similar in skill requirements to the JO Program's levels 4-6. The gymnast must score a 32 AA in Gold before advancing to the Platinum level or an 8.0 on an individual event to move forward as an Individual Event Specialist (IES).

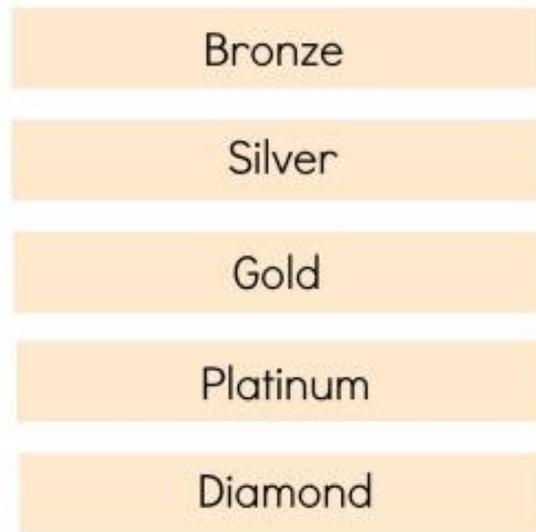
Platinum: The minimum age requirement for the Platinum division is 8 years old. (This means the gymnast must be 8 before she competes in her first meet.) The platinum division is similar in skill requirements to the JO program's level 5-7. The gymnast must score a 32 AA in Platinum before advancing to the Diamond level or an 8.0 on an individual event to move forward as an Individual Event Specialist (IES).

Diamond: The minimum age requirement for the Diamond division is 9 years old. (This means the gymnast must be 9 before she competes in her first meet.) The diamond division is similar in skill requirements to the JO program's levels 7 & 8.

Junior Olympic (JO) Levels



Xcel Levels



What to Expect at a Competition

Traditional Gymnastics Competition: This is what you have seen on TV. The gymnasts march out and are evaluated on vault, bars, beam, and floor by four or eight judges. The reality is not nearly as glamorous as you see on television, which has been heavily edited for the mass market. Be prepared; at the beginning levels the gyms are crammed with kids, the competition seems to last forever, and your gymnast may not get an award at all! You can pass the time by commiserating with the other team parents and complaining about the on-site cuisine and pro-shop trinkets.

A typical gymnastics competition is divided into **sessions**; each session contains athletes of one or more levels. Sometimes levels are grouped together, whereas others there are multiple sessions per level. How the gymnasts are grouped into sessions depends on the number of

competitors and the meet director; the USAG has rules which regulate the maximum number of competitors in a session.

WARM UP

The competition will begin with a **warm up**. Although it is called a "warm up" these periods closely resemble a workout. During the pre-competition warm up the gymnasts will begin stretching and other activities (no full floor tumbling allowed) and then move to their first event's apparatus for pre-competition skill and routine rehearsal. Time limits for each athlete or team are set so that everyone gets the same amount of time to practice.

MARCH IN

Following the warm up the athletes will assemble at some designated place (typically near their first event). They will then "march in" meaning they will salute when their team name is called; the judges for each event are also introduced. Then the National Anthem will be played.

COMPETITION

Following the **march in**, the gymnasts will disperse to their first competition event. They always stop by the judging tables at each event to acknowledge the judges and to say Hello. At some meets, such as sectional and state competitions at optional levels, gymnasts will begin yet another "warm up". This second warm up period is called the "30 second touch." This is true even though the gymnasts receive warm up time on the uneven bars, balance beam, floor exercise and vault. This touch time is so coveted that guards are assigned to monitor this time with a stop watch.

At some meets, gymnasts warm up on all events and then compete on all events (Traditional format), and other meets the order is warm up compete, warm up compete (Modified traditional format). Larger competitions use 'capitol cup format' where more than one set of apparatus is in use. The hosting facility decides the format. V, UB, BB, & FX

Gymnastics competitions for girls involve performances on four apparatuses called **events**: **vault** (VT), **uneven parallel bars** (UB), **balance beam** (BB), and **floor exercise** (FX). The gymnasts in a given session (level) are divided into roughly even **squads** who rotate among the four events (**rotations**), always proceeding in Olympic order: *vault - uneven bars - balance beam - floor exercise*. If your girl's squad happens to start on the balance beam, then her next event will be the floor exercise. At any given time, someone is competing on each of the four events.

VAULTING

Vaulting consists of a run of about 70' - 80' followed by a jump to a small wooden springing device called a **spring board** (what else?), and a diving flight to an apparatus which looks like a "tongue" (**table**) held up on metal posts (called a **horse**). The gymnast lands on her hands on the vault table, usually somewhere around a handstand, and pushes off, performs some movement, and then lands on her feet. Vaulting requires extreme quickness, a fast run, a hard push from the horse, some cool flips and stuff in the air, and a landing that is **stuck**. Gymnasts typically perform two vaults; the best vault determines the score. At the bronze level, athletes vault onto a minimum 16" mat. At the silver level, athletes use the vault table but land on top of a mat stack off the vault. Gold, Platinum & Diamond levels use the vault table.

UNEVEN BARS

The uneven parallel bars (**bars**) consist of two wood-covered, fiberglass rails held up by steel posts at different heights and a variable distance apart. Depending on the level of competition, routines consist of skills performed in a series. The gymnasts show large swing skills, **kips**, **casts**, **handstands**, a **release** and re-catch of the bars, some sort of somersaulting (**salto**) or twisting skill, a **dismount** to the floor, and a stuck landing. Bronze & Silver levels only use the low bar.

BALANCE BEAM

The balance beam (**beam**) is an apparatus made of steel and padding that is 5 meters (16.5 feet) long, 10 cm (4 inches) wide, and approximately 4 feet high. The gymnast will show a variety of skills from dance and tumbling and combine them into a routine which lasts from 30 - 90 seconds. Basically they do the same moves executed on the floor except they are confined to a space that is four inches wide.

FLOOR EXERCISE

Floor exercise (**floor**) is performed on area that is 12 meters x 12 meters (about 40ft x 40ft). There is a platform under the pad and carpet called a spring floor. The spring floor can be comprised of either springs or foam blocks or both. There are approx. 1,600 blocks or springs under the floor. The girls perform to music; each level of compulsory gymnasts perform to the same music; optional levels choose their own music. The routine should cover most of the area of the carpet (inside the lines), must include tumbling, and include lots of dance elements.

AWARDS

At the conclusion of a session awards are conferred on the girls who have done the best. **Medals** and/or **trophies** are given for each of the four events (V, UB, BB, FX), as well as the all-around (**AA**). The girls are grouped by both level and age (such as Gold level, ages 8 and below, Silver level, age 10, etc.). This is to limit direct competition between older and younger girls so that all have a fair shot at an award. The USAG mandates that at least 40 percent of the places receive awards; many competitions award 50 percent places (if there are 10 girls in a given level/age group then the top five places are recognized).

At many gymnastics meets there are **team competitions** as well. In this case, for each team, the top three (it can be more depending on the meet) scores in each event are added up, then all four team event scores are added to produce a final team score. Putting it all together, there are four events plus the all-around for each age group (plus team awards); this means that a lot of awards are doled out, and it can seem like it takes forever. Fortunately, we use computerized scoring software which helps keep forever from becoming a reality. *How well your daughter does in awards depends on both her score, which she controls, and who else is at the competition, which is out of her control.* While the girls tend to focus on the awards, it is really far more important that they do their best.

Understanding Scoring & the Jobs of a Judge

A Parent's guide to understanding Gymnastics Judging.

It's one thing to sit at a gymnastics competition and watch your daughter compete. But it's quite another thing to understand how the scoring system works. Here on CB and during the many competitions I've attended, it's a common complaint. "What didn't she do right? Why is her score lower than other girl?" As parents, we rely only on our limited knowledge of the sport for answers. When grasping to find these answers, I find it's always best to add a little education into the process to shed some light on the situation.

So I thought I'd offer what I've learned and scrounged up over the last year on the topic with the hopes of helping to provide that little light.

Judging gymnastics is complicated and tedious. Parents and spectators need to understand that a judge is only human, and each judge has a different background with a varied level of experience in the sport. Each judge is charged with presenting his or her opinions, used at their own discretion, with a different level of expectations. The judgment is **ONLY** an opinion of the performance on that particular day, for

any particular event.

Gymnastics judges must pass a test that requires a great deal of studying from a very thick manual (I've seen it!). They must stay current with changes to routines, the scoring systems, and keep up with professional growth opportunities throughout the year to be assigned to gymnastic meets each season. It's safe to say that judging gymnastics is not a full time career for most. It's a VERY part-time job, pays surprisingly little money, but still requires almost full time effort. It's also safe to say that most gymnastics judges adore the sport.

Here in the U.S, compulsory gymnastic routines are universally defined, and have a start value of 10.0 points. The routines, requirements, and penalties are outlined in a book, (aka. The purple book), and each skill or series of skills is given a value. As the athlete performs a routine, the judge notes any mistakes he or she sees in a code of symbols. Each symbol has a value, and after the routine is complete, the symbols are tallied and this amount is deducted from 10.0.

In Xcel levels, the created routines *must* contain certain elements. For example, silver bars requires 5 total skills, a mount, dismount, a circling skill, and a cast not less than 45 degrees from horizontal. As long as the routine contains those requirements, it begins with a start value of 10.0. There are a few exceptions to this rule when it comes to vault. Certain vaults have certain start values and changes dependent upon the level in which you are competing.

Some of the general deductions are "Flat" rate. A fall is 0.50, a change of a small part is 0.10, omitting or substituting a major element is double the value of the element, and extra step is 0.10, and a coach assist is the value of the element PLUS 0.50, overtime on the beam is 0.10. Just to name a few.

Then there are general "up to" deductions, and this is how judges seem to vary so much. For example, leg separation can be "up to" 0.20; a balance error is "up to" 0.30, insufficient split is "up to" 0.20, lack of overall rhythm during the routine is "up to" 0.40; incorrect body position on a major element is "up to" 0.20.

Then there are penalties for specific skills or a series in the routine that can be set values, or "up to" values. Some examples include: Not placing hands in the correct position on the vault – 0.50. Contacting the mat on the vault after the vertical- up to 1.00. Hooking the knee on a stride circle – 0.50. Failure to show hollow position during a back hip circle- up to 0.20. Failure to attain vertical in a handstand on beam dismount – 0.30. Early bending of the legs in beam mount-up – 0.20. etc.,.

There are literally pages and pages of rules and possible deductions. In fact, It's a wonder the scores are as high as they are. If judges were to think and write as fast as a computer with a video camera, the scores would be very low by many of our standards. The judges with years of experience usually have lower scores because they have so much practice judging gymnastics events. They "See it" faster, "think it" faster, and "record it" faster. Expectations are often higher because they've had the opportunity to witness truly great routines, and are now conditioned to expect it.

My best advice for parents and spectators is to simply accept the score for what it is: One person's opinion of the performance given on that particular day. I would encourage you to focus on the gymnast's performance compared to her own personal best, and if she has competed to the best of her ability on that day. It's been said many times on this board, "Parents make the best fan's" of gymnasts. Just remember

it's not about the score, it's only about your daughter. Be supportive on good and bad days. This alone will make your gymnastics experience just as fulfilling as doing gymnastics is for your daughter.

I hope this was helpful.

Glossary of Gymnastics Terms

Acro: Term referring to tumbling skill on beam or floor exercise, used most commonly when describing combination dance-acro requirements.

Aerial: A skill performed without the hands touching the floor or the apparatus. Most commonly used to refer to an aerial cartwheel or aerial (front) walkover.

All Around: Describes a gymnast who competes in all their gymnastics events. For men, this is six events, and for women it is four events. Also refers to the event competition won by scoring the highest score sum total in all of the events.

Arabesque: In gymnastics and ballet, a pose on one leg with the other leg extended behind the body. The supporting leg either bent or straight. Stand on one foot and raise the other leg to the back in a split (preferably a 180 degree split) with a straight leg and turned out from the hip; while keeping the trunk fully upright.

Also see **Turnout** and **Scale**

Artistic Gymnastics: The Olympic sport for men and women performed on apparatus and judged individually, by event, in the All-Around and by team. Men's events are *floor exercise, high bar, parallel bars, pommel horse, still rings* and *vault*. Women's events are *vault, uneven parallel bars, balance beam* and *floor exercise*.

A Skills: The lowest level of difficulty rating for gymnastics skills other than moves of no value. For example, front and back handsprings are rated as "A" level skills by the **FIG**. See **degree of difficulty**.

Back Handspring: A tumbling move where a gymnast takes off from one or two feet, jumps backward onto the hands and lands on the feet. This skill can be as a step-out skill (usual method on beam) or landed on two feet. Round-off back handsprings are the basis for almost all back tumbling skills. Back handsprings are also called a Flip-Flop or Flic-Flac.

Back Somersault: One of the number of terms for a back salto move that begins usually taking off two feet, rotates then lands again on the feet. Also called Back Flip, Back Salto, Back Tuck, Back Pike, Back Layout.

Back Somie/Back Salto Dismount: A somersaulting dismount off beam, parallel bars, rings, bars or even pommel horse using an back aerial somersault.

Back Walkover: A control skill gymnastics move starting and finishing on the feet and made by lifting one leg, arching back into and passing through a handstand position by bringing one foot, then the other over the top and stepping down from the handstand into a lunge. Done on floor and beam and often used on beam in combination with a back handspring to fulfill the flight series combination requirement.

Balance Beam: 1) A piece of women's gymnastics apparatus 120 centimeters (4 feet) high, 10 centimeters (4 inches) wide, and 500 centimeters (16.5 feet) long. 2) A women's gymnastics event performed on the balance beam apparatus. The balance beam routine should last between 70 to 90 seconds and includes a variety of acrobatic, gymnastic, and dance moves, ending with a dismount.

Bar: A horizontal rod that serves as a part of a gymnastics apparatus for gymnasts as they perform exercises. They are found on uneven bars, high bars and parallel bars. A bar can also be called a **Rail**.

Block: The term block in gymnastics is usually used to describe a rapid bounce, repulsion or rebounding off the floor or vault with the arms. The block comes from the shoulders exploding towards full extension and usually is used in reference to handsprings on floor and all vaults off the vault horse..

Bridge: Another term for a backbend in which the body forms an arch, supported by the hands and feet. Ideally, the arms and legs should be straight and close together. It is often done starting by lying on the floor, bending the knees up with the feet on the floor and then pushing up with the arms and legs.

Cartwheel: A gymnastics movement where the gymnast moves sideways (in the motion the wheel of a cart would follow) in a straight line alternately placing the hands and feet on the ground and finishing with the body coming up to a lunge landing position. The name cartwheel is so named because when a gymnast performs this, their arms and legs move like the spokes of a turning wheel.

Cast: A basic uneven bars skill where the gymnast starts with her shoulders above the bar in a pike position and then rebounds above the bar in a nearly straight or hollow position with arms extended. As the gymnast progresses through the compulsory levels to the optional levels casts become higher, going from parallel to the floor at the Gold level to a handstand at the Diamond Level. The cast requires a great deal of upper body strength.

Clear Hip Circle: A back hip circle in which the body hips do not touch the bar. At the optional level, the skill should start and finish in a handstand. Also called a **Free Hip Handstand** or **Free Hip Circle**.

Code of Points: The official FIG rulebook for judging gymnastics skills from the International Gymnastics Federation with the rules in which the scoring system and the composition of a program are based. The code of points specifies the difficulty value of all skills, as well as outlines requirements that must be fulfilled for each event. It is a necessary and valuable tool for coaches and judges. See **FIG**

Compulsories: A routine in which the elements are pre-determined by an organization such as USA Gymnastics (or other national federation) or by the FIG. Routines that are specified and designated by the gymnastics federation for certain levels of gymnasts and which all gymnasts at that level must perform. Compulsory routines are no longer a part of international competitions. They are used in the U.S. at the beginning levels of gymnastics competition (Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6) and as a part of Elite testing. Also called mandatory routines.

Compulsory: All gymnasts competing compulsory routines must perform specified skills in a specified order. Compulsory routines have been eliminated from higher level optional gymnastics competitions. Compulsory is an adjective used to describe routines, levels and gymnasts.

Deduction: Points that each judge deducts for each incorrect execution and/or composition. Points are taken off a gymnast's score for any errors. Most deductions are pre-determined, such as a 0.5 deduction for a fall from an apparatus or a 0.1 deduction for stepping out of bounds on the floor exercise. Small

deductions are .1 and judges now often take off a half a tenth. Medium deductions are .2 and large deductions are .3. At the end of the routine the deductions are added up together and are deducted from 10.0 (or the starting value of the routine) in order to give the final gymnast's score.

Degree Of Difficulty: A rating that measures the difficulty of the specific moves in a gymnast's routine. It is factored into the total score after judges have scored the execution of the moves. Each skill has a Level of difficulty rated by the FIG as an A, B, C, D E or Super E level skill. Difficulty in a routine is created by the combination of difficult skills or by performing the very difficult E or Super E skills. See **Bonus Points**.

Dismount: The term used for the last skill in a gymnastics routine. For most events the method used to get off of the event apparatus. In high level competition, this skill should be at most one skill value below the hardest skill in the routine, e.g. if there is a E value skill in the routine, the dismount should be of at least D value.

Double Back: A tumbling skill with two consecutive backwards somersaults done in the same skill movement. Double backs can be done in any body position – tuck, pike, open, or layout.

Double, Double: A double twisting, double back somersault tumbling skill. This is perhaps the most difficult tumbling skill currently done on a regulation gymnastics floor. It is done in either the open tuck position or in layout. It is also used as a dismount on high bar, rings, and uneven bars.

Double Full: A gymnastics tumbling skill consisting of a single layout salto with two twists. It can also be done as a dismount from beam or bars, although it is rarely used off bars because of the difficulty of landing upright. Also called a **Double Twist**.

Double Lay/Double Layout: A double back salto performed in the layout position.

Double Twist: A single layout somersault with two twists. See **Double Full**.

Element: A single move that has a recognized way of performance and technical value. To be named after a gymnast, he or she must first submit the element to the FIG and then successfully perform the element in a FIG sanctioned international competition, such as the World Championships or Olympic Games.

Events: The 4 women's events in gymnastics are Floor, Uneven Bars, Beam and Vault. The 6 men's events are Floor, Pommel Horse, Rings, Vault, Parallel Bars and High Bar.

Execution: The amplitude, form, style and technique used to complete the skills in in the performance of a routine. Bent knees, bent elbows, and flexed toes are examples of poor execution.

Extension: A term commonly used by gymnasts and coaches to refer to the height of the leg when it is raised into the air during a dance skill.

Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): The international and Olympic governing body of competitive gymnastics. The FIG is recognized by the International Olympic Committee and is responsible for the governance of the sport of gymnastics on the international level. They draw up the rules, known as the *Code of Points*, which dictate how judges assess gymnasts and the manner in which all international competitions are run..

Flexibility: The ability to move a body joint through its full range of motion, the range of motion through which a joint can move without feeling pain. To have a wide range of motion in a joint. An example of the types of flexibility required of gymnasts is to be able to do all three splits.

Floor Exercise: A gymnastics event which is competed by both men and women, where the gymnast performs tumbling and acrobatic passes on a 40 foot square spring floor. Women's floor exercise is done to music.

Flyaway: A back salto dismount from either the uneven bars or high bar. Can be done in tuck pike or layout.

Forward Somersault: A front salto tumbling skill on the floor exercise or balance beam, done in the tuck, pike or layout positions.

Front Giant: A front circling skill done on high bar or uneven bars that begins and finishes in a handstand and circles around the bar in a fully extended position with the hands holding onto the bar with a reverse grip.

Front Handspring: A front tumbling skill that begins with a hurdle step and rotates 360 degrees from feet to hands to feet again. Correct execution includes a strong shoulder block and straight arms and legs. Front handsprings can be stepped out or landed on two feet.

Front Hip Circle: A mount for the uneven bars in which the body is supported by the hands and the hips rest on the bar. The body falls forward, pikes, the hands rotate around the bar and the gymnast ends up in a front support again.

Front Somersault: Same as *Forward Somersault*.

Front Split: A split in which one leg is extended frontward and the other leg is extended backward, both at right angles to the trunk. Ideally, the legs are split at least 180 degrees and are flat on the floor (or beam), the hips are square facing to the front and both legs are turned out from the hips. Also called *Side Split* or stride split. See also *Turnout*.

Front Walkover: A control skill floor and beam move where a gymnast lunges into a split handstand and continues to walk over and step out onto the feet. This move requires both shoulder and back flexibility.

Front: A *Forward Somersault*.

Full Twisting Double Back: A double back with a full twist on either of the saltos.

Full: A back somersault with one full twist in the longitudinal axis, usually done in the layout position.

Full-in, Back-out: A double salto with a full twist with the full twist being performed during the first salto. Also called a Full-in.

Full-in, Full-out: A double twisting double somersault with a full twist on the first salto and a full twist on the second salto. Also called a full-out.

Full Turn: A 360 degree turn gymnastics or dance skill required on both floor and beam. The turn is traditionally done on one foot and the arms and legs are held and used in a variety of optional positions.

Giant: A 360 degrees circling swing through around the bar from handstand to handstand, with the body fully extended. It can be performed on uneven bars, high bar, rings and parallel bars, and can be done either backwards or forwards.

Grips: Grips are the leather straps that gymnasts wear to help keep a better grip on the uneven bars, high bar, parallel bars or rings. The purpose of grips is to help maintain a firm grip on the equipment and to help minimize the occurrence of *rips*. Uneven bar grips have 2 finger holes and a medium size dowel that is smaller than on grips for rings, but larger than the dowel for high bar. High bar grips are typically 3 finger with a small dowel. Ring grips are 2 finger, long and have a large dowel. Parallel bar grips exist, but are rarely used.

Half-in, Half-out: A tumbling skill and bar dismount that consists of a double salto with a half twist on the first salto and a half twist on the second salto, usually done like an arabian double front with a half.

Handspring: A front or back tumbling skill that takes off the feet onto the hands and back onto the feet. It is commonly a set-up for a front or back salto. See also Flip-Flop, Front Handspring, Back Handspring

Handspring Front: A term used to indicate either a tumbling pass or vault involving a handspring and front salto. The handspring front vault is a double front vault with a handspring on the front side and a front salto on the back side. The tumbling pass is two skill performed in sequence a front handspring directly connected into a front salto.

Handstand: An inverted gymnastics control skill performed by supporting the body on both hands, with the arms straight and the body vertical. It is a core gymnastics skill and used or passed through on every gymnastics event. Performing a solid handstand requires above-average upper body strength. In a proper handstand, the legs are together, but there are a large variety of optional leg positions used on floor and beam.

Head In: This is a body position in gymnastics, usually in a handstand, during tumbling or during a giant, where the gymnast's head is down, with their chin tucked in on their chest or close to it. This is the correct head position on handstands and many tumbling, bars and beam skills. It is a commonly heard coaching correction.

Head Out: A gymnast's head is up and their chin is tilted back. This automatically causes an arch in the back, which is a weak body position. There are very few skills in gymnastics and virtually none on bars where having the head out is desirable.

High Bar: This term denotes either the men's horizontal bar apparatus or event. It also refers to the top bar on the women's uneven bars.

Hip Circle: A very basic bar circling skill done on the uneven bars or high bar in which the body circles around the bar with the body touching the bar at the hips and the hands and arms supporting the body. There are both front hip circles (usually done out of a kip) and back hip circles (done out of a *cast*). Neither of these skills are used in optional competition any more. Back hip circles are a progression of free hips. Both hip circles are currently used as USA Gymnastics Compulsory skills.

Hollow: A term referring to a gymnastics body position, where hips are turned under, the butt is tucked in and the chest is rounded forward. This is a very important body position in the sport of gymnastics

and must be memorized and strengthened. It is often subtly used in connection with a slight arch position to initiate or control gymnastics movements on every event.

Inward turn: A gymnastics or ballet turn on the feet (foot) in the opposite direction of the supporting leg. In other words, if a gymnast does a traditional full turn on the left leg turning it to the left, an inward turn is done on the same leg and turns to the right. Inward turns are also known as reverse turns. See also Full Turn.

Kip: A gymnastics bar skill move designed to move from a glide or hang on the bars to a support position. It is done on high bar, uneven bars and the parallel bars. The skill uses transfer of momentum and is done by swinging or gliding (to a fully extended position), bringing the toes to the bar, jamming up the leg and pulling with straight arms up to a front support position. This is a basic bar skill and is first used in the USAG compulsory at Level 5.

Layout: This term refers to a straight body position in which salto skills are performed. Almost all twisting skills are done in this position, since it facilitates the twisting process. Twisting double somersaults, however, are often done in the open position. There is usually a very subtle arch hollow action used in layout somersaults, which facilitates rotation. Also called the stretched position.

Layout Step-Out: A tumbling skill used on beam and sometimes on floor. During a back layout salto the legs are split and the landing is on one foot and then the other. Most often used now as part of a back tumbling series on beam.

Mat: A term that refers to the various types of covered soft polyurethane foam landing equipment. Mats are used for safety, dismount landings and for performing on.

Mount: This term is used both to identify the first skill with which the gymnast starts a gymnastics routine and also means to get up onto a gymnastics apparatus.

Olympic Order: This refers to the order in which gymnastics events proceed in international competition. Unless there are other valid meet planning reasons not to do so, it is the order at every other gymnastics competition, also. The Olympic order for women is vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise. The Olympic order for men's competition is floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar. Olympic order for rhythmic gymnasts is rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon.

Optionals: A category of competition in which gymnasts and coaches individually create routines in which the gymnast may perform skills of their choosing which meet the rules as specified in the FIG code of points and under the constraints of listed special requirements. Optional gymnasts present their best skills in their routines. Optional gymnasts are higher level gymnasts than Compulsory gymnasts are.

Overgrip: An overgrip is hanging (swinging) on the bar with the palm of the hand and fingers facing away from the gymnast.

Overshoot: A release move from the high bar to the low bar. It starts on the on high bar facing low bar. The gymnast swings up and over the low bar with a half turn to a catch of the low bar. Also called an Underswing.

Pike: A gymnastics body position used in jumps and saltos with the body bent forward at the waist with the legs kept straight. Judges look for more than a 90 degree bend at the hips for correct execution. Somersaulting skills done in pike position are more difficult than the ones in tuck position and easier than saltos done in layout position..

Pirouette: A term used in both gymnastics and dance to refer to a turn around the body's longitudinal axis. It is used to refer to both handstand turning moves on bars and p-bars and also to refer to a dancing element, e.g. to turn on one foot. Turns for both are measured in degrees or increments of $\frac{1}{2}$ turns. The dance term literally means "whirligig," which is an old fashioned name for a child's top. Pirouette is now used to describe the many kinds of turns that gymnasts and dancers do on toe.

Pointed Toes: Toe point is an important factor in gymnastics. When the toes and foot are pulled downward so that the line from the knee to the tip of the toes is essentially straight and there is no angle in the ankle. This emphasizes a long straight leg and body line.

Puck: A puck is a slang gymnastics term used to refer to a gymnastics salto body position that is a cross between a pike and a tuck. It can range from a very open tuck position to a pike with bent knees. It is not an acceptable competition salto position.

Punch: A gymnastics term that refers to bouncing off of the floor, vault board or beam as opposed to jumping. "Punching" refers to an almost perfectly straight leg quick plyometric movement. Punching movements allow gymnasts to more fully utilize the inherent spring in the gymnastics equipment. Jumping involves bending the legs and pushing.

Rail: A horizontal rod that serves as a part of a gymnastics apparatus for gymnasts as they perform exercises. They are found on uneven bars, high bars and parallel bars. A rail can also be called a **Bar**.

Re-grasp: On uneven bars and high bar, the act of grabbing the bar again after releasing from it.

Release: On uneven bars and high bar, to let go of the bar in order to perform another gymnastics move before grasping it again. There are many bar release moves, including somersault and twisting moves. In general, they belong to the very difficult elements.

Rip: In gymnastics, a rip occurs is when a gymnast works so hard on the bars or rings that they tear off a flap of skin from their hand. The injury is like a blister that breaks open.

Rotation: This is the name for the circular motion around an axis of the body. In gymnastics there are salto rotations and twisting rotations.

Round-off: A floor or beam skill similar to a cartwheel, but with both feet landing at the same time. It is almost always the beginning skill for all back tumbling passes.

Routine: In gymnastics, a routine is combination of skill elements on one apparatus or event. The number and difficulty of skills depends on the competition format, and skill level of the competitors.

Scale: In ballet or gymnastics, when the leg is raised high (ideally to a 180 degree split) while balancing on the other leg. Typically done on beam and may be done to the front, back or side and with the upper body lowered slightly.

Scissor Kick: A jump from one foot to the other alternately kicking one leg up and then the other with legs straight, simulating the motion of scissors.

Scissors Leap: (also called switch leap or a switch split leap) A leap in which the legs exchange positions while in the air, showing a split with both legs in one jump.

Somersault/Salto: An acrobatic movement where the body makes a complete aerial turn (360 degrees) in the transversal axis. Can be done forward, backward and sideward. It is performed as mount, dismount or during a routine. Also called a flip or a somie.

Specialist: A gymnast that competes selected events as opposed to competing all of the events in the All Around. A gymnast that competes only rings would be referred to as a ring specialist. This is currently most common in men's gymnastics. Specialists often, (but not always) do more difficult skills and routines with a higher degree of competency than all-around gymnasts can do.

Split: Any front or sideward body position in which the legs are extended apart as far as possible in opposite directions with the ideal angle of the legs being 180 degrees or more apart. Splits are designated as side splits or straddle splits.

Split Leap: To perform a split in the air while jumping from one foot and landing on the opposite foot and assuming a split position in mid-air. Ideally done with a split of 180 degrees or slightly more. In a side split one leg is forward, the other leg back. Hips are kept as square as possible. To get the split flexibility required to do a split leap correctly it is important to stretch often.

Spotting Belt: A spotting belt is a belt that a gymnast wears to which is attached to ropes or cables that are attached to pulleys connected to the ceiling or a tower. This device allows a coach to support a gymnast when working multiple flipping or twisting skills in a situation when a hand spot would be difficult. They are often used over trampolines.

Spotting: Spotting or to "spot" someone in gymnastics means to physically assist them in safely completing a skill. The amount of spot can range from cueing the gymnast to completely carrying the gymnast through the motion. A spot can be used to reduce risk of injury, or to ensure proper technique or body positioning. Spotting can be done hands on, or with a spotting device such as a spotting belt.

Start Value: This is a term that refers to gymnastics scoring. The start value of a routine indicates the relative difficulty of the routine. Compulsory routines all start from a 10.0 start value and deductions are made from 10.0. Currently, in lower level optional competition in the United States, gymnasts must accumulate bonus points to have their routine start from a 10.0. New Elite and International rules allow unlimited difficulty, which means the start value of routines will be as high as a gymnast can make it.

Step Out: On tumbling skills, this means that a gymnast lands on one foot and then the other as opposed to landing on both feet simultaneously. The action is done in a straight line and resemble walking steps. Also called a walk-out.

Stick: A gymnastics term used when a gymnast executes a dismount or landing with such good technique that they take no steps on the landing. Also refers to the traditional position which gymnasts hold on landing dismounts. Sticking consistently takes regular practice.

Straddle: A body position in which the body faces forward and the legs are spread far apart to the side, ideally to a 180 degree split or more.

Straddle Back: An women's uneven bar release skill done from a swing backwards on the high bar backwards over low bar, ideally to a handstand to the low bar.

Straddle Glide: A swinging movement usually done into a kip in which the legs are spread wide apart to each side usually to make it easier to hold up the legs as oppose to a pike glide.

Straddle Split: A split in which the legs are extended to the left and right, until a 180 degree angle between the legs is reached.

Straight Position: A gymnastics body position, usually in tumbling or somersaulting dismounts in which the body is straight. The elements performed in this position are more difficult than ones done in tuck or pike. Also called the layout position.

Switch Leap: switch slit leap beginning with one leg in front, switching to other mid-flight.

Tap: The term is most often used on high and uneven bar events to describe the kick used to generate the required speed and rotation for a circling skill, release skill or dismount. Typically, a dynamic motion used to generate momentum.

Tsukahara: A men's or women's vault named after Japanese gymnast, Mitsuo Tsukahara. It consists of a $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ on to a back salto off the vault table.

Tuck Position: A gymnastics body position where the knees and hips are bent and drawn into the chest with the hands holding the knees. This body position is used in somersaults to rotate faster. Variation on the tuck position include the open tuck and cowboy tuck positions.

Tumbling Pass: In floor exercise and tumbling, this term is used to indicate a series of connected tumbling elements.

Turn: A gymnastics and ballet movement where the rotation occurs upright on the body's axis on one or both feet. A minimum of a full turn is often a requirement on floor exercise and beam.

Turnout: In gymnastics and ballet, a rotation of the leg which comes from the hips, causing the knee and foot to turn outward, away from the center of the body. This allows for greater extension of the leg, especially when raising it to the side and rear and for better balance when performing dance skills and on beam. This characteristic most distinguishes ballet from other forms of dance. It refers to the outward rotation of the legs in the hip socket, so that if one were to look at the feet in first position (heel to heel), they would appear to make a straight line.

Twist: A movement in acrobatic skills where the rotation is about the longitudinal, or vertical, axis. This is the axis that runs from head to toes. Twisting is usually defined in terms of which shoulder moves backwards first. A right twist is defined as the right shoulder going backwards, the opposite is true for a left twist. Twisting usually refers to an action that occurs simultaneously with a somersault so the body is both twisting and flipping.

Twisting Degrees: Fractions and degrees are used in order to describe twisting movements. A $\frac{1}{2}$ twist is a 180-degree twist, a full ($1/1$) twist is a 360 degree twist. A $1\frac{1}{2}$ twist is 540 degrees of twist. A double

twist (2/1) is 720 degrees of twist. A 2 & ½ twist is 900 degrees. A triple twist is a 1080-degree twist. A 3 & ½ twist is 1260 degrees. A quad twist is a 1440-degree twist.

Undergrip: A term referring to the type of grip which gymnasts use on uneven bars or high bar. Hanging on a bar with your fingers facing you. Also called a reverse grip.

Underswing: A release move from the high bar to the low bar. It starts on the on high bar facing low bar. The gymnast swings up and over the low bar with a half turn to a catch of the low bar. Also called a Shoot Over or Overshoot.

Uneven Bars: A women's gymnastics apparatus consisting of two fiberglass composite bars - a low bar 148 centimeters high and a high bar 228 centimeters high and set a maximum of 150 centimeters apart.

Vault: A gymnastics event performed over the vaulting table by both men and women. The gymnast runs down the padded vault runway, vaults off the vaulting springboard onto the horse, blocks off the hands, and finishes the vault to land in a standing position. At the lower level, each competitor performs two vaults and the scores are averaged. In Elite and international competition, only one vault is performed, except in Finals.

Vault Table: The vault table is the new vaulting apparatus for both men and women. The new vault table is designed to be safer by offering a wider and longer top surface to provide a better margin of error for hand placement, especially on round-off entry vaults. The men's vaulting horse was 135 centimeters high, the women's 120 centimeters high.

Yurchenko: A gymnastics vault now performed by both men and women, consisting of a roundoff onto the springboard, then a back handspring like movement onto the vault, followed by some type of back somersaulting movement off of the vault table. Named for Soviet gymnast Natalia Yurchenko, who created it.