



“How to Fall Training” Information Document

In any sport, there is increased potential for accidents and injuries. Participation at any level carries risk, but in the world of performance gymnastics, this risk is heightened due to the very nature of the sport.

Gymnastics coaches work hard to reduce and manage the risk of accidents and injury, but it is impossible to protect gymnasts entirely. Although there has been a gradual methodology in developing technically accurate skills, improving the training environment and equipment, and in decision making, there still remains a high chance of an injury-causing scenario where a gymnast may fall or fail in a skill. As coaches, we still cannot completely control what our gymnasts do.

Sometimes it's just bad luck

While much of our coaching time will be spent teaching gymnasts how to do things right, with skill and accuracy, a portion of this time should be devoted to teaching them what to do when things go wrong. And things will go wrong. Which is why gymnasts need to learn how to deal with it.

When a gymnast is performing a skill for the first time, ask yourself:

- *What* will happen if this goes wrong?
- *What* could go wrong here?
- *If* the gymnast makes an error, can they escape without harm?
- *Are* they coordinated enough?
- *Are* they prepared both physically and mentally for the skill?
- *Have* they been trained to fall correctly?

Learning how to fall

One of the biggest causes of injury in the workplace is slip, trip and fall accidents. In the world of gymnastics, a significant number of injuries are caused by gymnasts not falling correctly. Just to be clear, when we talk about ‘falling’ we are not just talking about dropping safely from the beam or bars because of a technical error. We are talking about gymnasts losing control or a lack of awareness in how they are moving, and then simply ‘falling over.’

Self-preservation is in our nature and it is instinctive to try and brace or break a fall with outstretched arms or hands. This action exposes in particular the shoulder, elbow and wrist joints to potential dislocations and fractures.



Any sport which challenges us through balance, stability and spatial awareness, such as skiing and skating, puts us at risk of falling. But we shouldn't overlook everyday activities and the potential for tripping on an uneven surface or slipping on a wet floor.

So what can be done?

There are easy steps that can be taken to help improve your gymnasts' ability to control falls. The critical element is to teach them how to roll safely when over rotating in the direction in which they are travelling.

Top tips:

- Use drills: for skills involving rotations, twisting or carry a high risk of falling, use drills to teach your gymnasts how to fall safely. As a rule, gymnasts should NEVER USE THEIR ARMS OR HANDS to brace themselves, regardless of whether they are falling forwards, backwards or sideways.
- Cross their arms: teach gymnasts to protect themselves in a backwards fall by crossing their arms over their chest. Alternatively, if over rotating then they should backwards roll.
- If falling or over rotating forwards: teach your gymnasts to quickly turn on to their back before hitting the floor (with their arms crossed over their chest) or add a forward/diagonal shoulder roll. Both of these require excellent reactions and awareness.
- If falling flat to the front: coach them to land with their arms outstretched flat. Their legs need to be flush to the floor and they should never land in a hands and knees position. This is especially important for the bars when gymnasts miss-release or catch elements. This is something you need to plan for – it will happen A LOT! Gymnasts may be 'winded' depending on the surface they land on, but this is nothing compared to breaking or dislocating a joint or bone.
- Include regular drill exercises: improve the familiarity and general awareness of 'safely' falling with regular drill exercises in your coaching sessions. It may only require a few minutes a week but it will keep things fresh in the mind of your gymnasts.
- Make gymnasts consciously aware: if a gymnast falls with 'poor technique' you need to make them aware of what they did wrong and emphasise the importance of falling correctly.



THE ACADEMY OF
GYMNASTICS

1 Harbourmead, Harbour Road
Portishead Bristol BS20 7AY
Tel: 01275 840077
Website: www.thegymacademy.co.uk
Email: admin@thegymacademy.co.uk

Inspiring Children

- Recognise mental state and fatigue: if a gymnast is not focused, or is fatigued, distracted, or unprepared, then you could be exposing them to a higher risk of making a mistake. *(There may be times when you NEED the athlete to train fatigued, or under pressurised scenarios to develop mental and physical robustness, but these times must be CALCULATED, with appropriate measures taken to manage risk.)*

Training your gymnasts on how to fall safely is a wise investment of time. Managing risk appropriately can save you weeks, if not months, and potentially a career.

Now watch the video by following the link attached <https://youtu.be/YM1GsaKgsOQ>