

## INSTRUCTIONS

This Learning Packet has two parts: (1) text to read and (2) questions and puzzles.

The text describes a particular sport or physical activity, and relates its history, rules, playing techniques, scoring, notes and news.

The Response Forms (questions and puzzles) check your understanding and appreciation of the sport or physical activity.

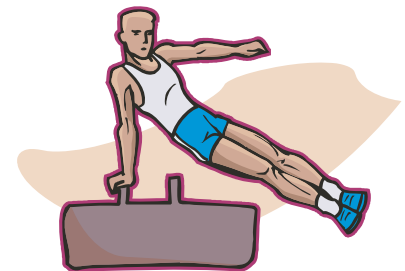
## INTRODUCTION

Some people consider gymnastics to be the purest of all sports or athletic activities. The human body can perform movements that are exquisite to behold. For this reason, gymnastics is visually exciting. Yet many casual viewers and enthusiasts alike do not realize how much dedication, skill and training are required on the part of gymnastic performers.

Gymnastics has grown in popularity in the United States, perhaps due to the good press given to this sport in recent Olympic competitions. Currently, there are about 40,000 competing gymnasts in the United States.

## HISTORY OF GYMNASTICS

Gymnastics has been popular since ancient Greece. However, “modern” gymnastics began only in the 1820s, when Ludwig Jahn founded gymnasiums, called “Turnverein,” throughout Germany. Jahn also invented equipment, including parallel bars, the horizontal bar, rings and the horse. This equipment is still in use today.



The first gym club was built in America in 1850. The first college to train teachers in gymnastics began in 1865. In 1888, the Amateur Gymnastics Association was founded in England.

Men’s gymnastics was one of the original seven sports included in the first modern

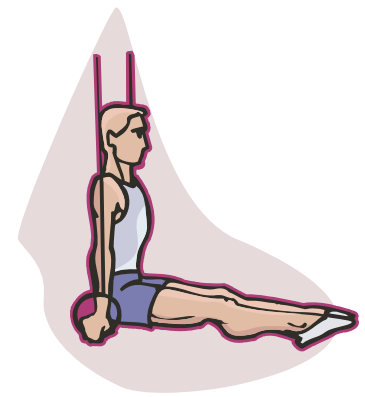
Olympic Games, held at Athens in 1896. Starting in 1928, women were included in the competition. In 1950, the world championships were introduced. They have been held regularly at four-year intervals ever since.

## TRAINING REQUIRED

Gymnastics is similar to ballet in terms of the physical demands and personal sacrifice required. Aspiring gymnasts typically start to train seriously when they are about eight years old. Two organizations, the Junior Olympic program of the United States Gymnastic Federation (USGF) and the Junior Olympic Gymnastic Program of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), offer classes for young people from nine to eighteen years of age.

Many high schools and colleges offer comprehensive programs in gymnastics. At the high school level, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) oversees the rules and regulations for both men and women engaged in gymnastics.

A final state high school championship is the culminating year-end event held annually. College-level gymnastics is controlled by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).



Eastern European countries, particularly Romania and Russia, have had a history of dominating the international gymnastics scene. Children in these countries tend to start their training at an early age. Also, the government directs the athletic programs. These programs tend to combine the best elements of gymnastic training from many different countries.

## HOW GYMNASTICS IS PERFORMED

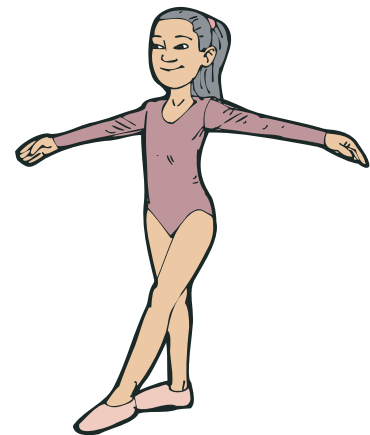
### *GYMNASTIC TERMS AND MOVES*

The following terms illustrate the type of language gymnasts use to describe specific moves. Just as baseball, golf, bowling and other sports have their own language, so does gymnastics. On the next page are some important and frequently-heard terms in gymnastics:

**Axis** An imaginary line around which the body rotates.

**Arab spring** A move in which the legs come together as the body makes a one-quarter turn (similar to a cartwheel).

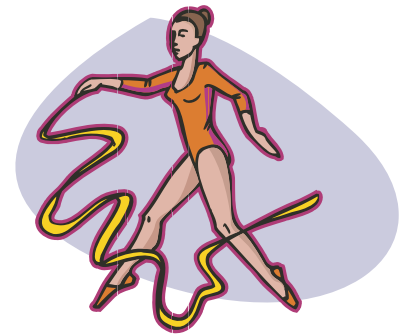
|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Bridge position</b>   | As the body is in a handstand position, the shoulders move away from the hands while the feet reach toward the floor, slightly apart. The knees are bent and the body forms a wide back arch.  |
| <b>Dislocate</b>         | On the rings, the legs are thrown up and back as the arms are spread out to the side. The body is arched as the feet are swung back down to touch the floor.   |
| <b>Felge</b>             | On the parallel bars, the gymnast hangs upside down as he/she turns backward and lets go, re-grasping the parallel bars in the hang or front positions.  |
| <b>Hecht jump</b>        | A jump executed from the highest of two asymmetrical bars in which the body is folded around the lower bar and continues to circle until the legs point down at a 45-degree angle. The body is then extended from the hips as the gymnast jumps to the floor with legs straightened and arms extended. |
| <b>Piked position</b>    | The standard position for performing a variety of exercises in which the knees are straight and the hips flexed as far as possible.  |
| <b>Tuck</b>              | The body position where the back is rounded and the chin is on the chest. The knees are also bent up to the chest.   |
| <b>Straddle</b>          | A body position where the legs are apart.  |
| <b>Russian giant</b>     | A movement done on the horizontal bar. This is also called the inverted giant swing.   |
| <b>Split right angle</b> | A move done on both the rings and parallel bars, also known as the “straddle L” position.  |



## *TYPES OF GYMNASTICS*

The two types of gymnastics most commonly seen in competition are artistic gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics. Artistic events are performed on equipment and on floor mats. In the men's division, there are six events: floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars and the horizontal bar. The women's division includes four events: floor exercise, uneven bars, vault and balance beams.

Rhythmic gymnastics is a mix of acrobatics, juggling and ballet. Gymnasts are required to perform movements that show off their flexibility and dexterity. Many use balls, ropes, hoops and ribbons as part of the performance. Technically called "gymnastique moderne," this form of gymnastics originated in France and is performed only by women.

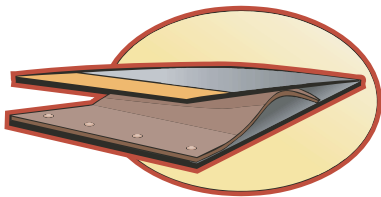


## **GYMNASTIC TECHNIQUES**

### *WOMEN'S AND MEN'S GYMNASTIC SKILLS*

Below is a sample of traditional women's and men's gymnastic skills. Remember, though, that this is just a sample of the many requirements for competition.

#### **Women's Olympic Vaulting**



In competition, the vault exercise is divided into two sections called first and second flight. First flight, or the first half of a movement, is the point at which judges carefully watch the take-off, including the body lifting through the air until it reaches the vault. In the second flight, moves from the vault to the dismount are stressed, including balance, stretch of the body and general direction.

#### **Men's Floor Exercises**

Judges base their opinions on how well a gymnast combines motions in a rhythmic way. Skips, jumps, handsprings, and other movements must be combined in such a way as to make it look as if the routine is one continuous movement covering the entire floor space. Flexibility, balance, hold and strength, as well as creativity, are awarded points. Over-long runs, low height and other flaws in execution will result in points being deducted from the final score.

## Women's Asymmetrical Bar

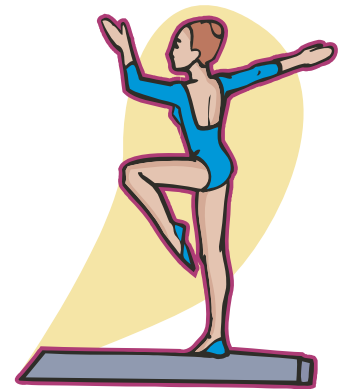
The routine done on the uneven bars must include constant motion. A gymnast is allowed only two momentary rests to regain balance. Judging is based on the passage of the body between the bars, the different hand grips on each bar, the suspension, and the degree of difficulty of the movements in the routine.

## Men's Horizontal Bar

The key to doing well in competition is to include at least one movement where both hands are taken off the bar. The bar then is grabbed again. Other crucial movements include the forward and backward giant swings, free hip circles and turns. The gymnast must be in constant motion for this entire routine to avoid losing points.

## Women's Balance Beam

The balance beam is sixteen and a half feet long and four inches wide. It tests a female athlete's balance as she performs jumps leaps, turns, runs and walks across the entire length of the beam. The entire routine lasts between 80 and 105 seconds. Three short stops are allowed to regain balance. If the gymnast falls, she can start again within ten seconds.



## EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Equipment for gymnastics includes:

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Parallel bars            | Men's horizontal bar |
| Women's asymmetrical bar | Horse                |
| Women's balance beam     | Static rings         |

Clothing for gymnastics is usually form-fitting and flexible, such as leotards and gym suits. For major competitions, costumes are often worn.

## GYMNASTICS NOTES AND NEWS (Information taken from a variety of sources including ESPN, NCAA, Wikipedia and newspapers)

The popularity of gymnastics got a special boost in 1972, when Americans and Canadians alike fell in love with Olga Korbut, the tiny Russian champion. Then, in 1976, when Nadia Comaneci scored a perfect 10 in the uneven parallel bars competition, even people who didn't know what parallel bars were knew perfection when they saw it. Follow these

two with the warm, cheering, friendly smile of Mary Lou Retton in 1984 and you have a public that has come to love women's gymnastics.

But there is interest in men's gymnastics, too. The 1970s and 80s fitness craze in North America led to a heightened appreciation of physical conditioning, strength and endurance. Few athletes are better conditioned than gymnasts.

The rigorous competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympics produced these results:



### ***Men's Team***

|        |       |
|--------|-------|
| Gold   | China |
| Silver | Japan |
| Bronze | USA   |

### ***Women's Team***

|        |         |
|--------|---------|
| Gold   | China   |
| Silver | USA     |
| Bronze | Romania |

### ***Men's Individual All-around***

|        |                 |        |
|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Gold   | YANG Wei        | China  |
| Silver | UCHIMURA Kohei  | Japan  |
| Bronze | CARANOBE Benoit | France |

### ***Women's Individual All-around***

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| LIUKIN Nastia | United States |
| JOHNSON Shawn | United States |
| YANG Yilin    | China         |

### ***Men's Floor Exercise***

|        |                 |              |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|
| Gold   | ZOU Kai         | China        |
| Silver | DEFERR Gervasio | Spain        |
| Bronze | GOLOTSUTSKOV A. | Russian Fed. |

### ***Women's Vault***

|        |                |           |
|--------|----------------|-----------|
| Gold   | HONG Un Jong   | DPR Korea |
| Silver | CHUSOVITINA O. | Germany   |
| Bronze | CHENG Fei      | China     |

### ***Men's Pommel Horse***

|        |             |               |
|--------|-------------|---------------|
| Gold   | XIAO Qin    | China         |
| Silver | UDE Filip   | Croatia       |
| Bronze | SMITH Louis | Great Britain |

### ***Women's Floor Exercise***

|        |               |               |
|--------|---------------|---------------|
| Gold   | IZBASA Sandra | Romania       |
| Silver | JOHNSON Shawn | United States |
| Bronze | LIUKIN Nastia | United States |

### ***Men's Rings***

|        |             |         |
|--------|-------------|---------|
| Gold   | CHEN Yibing | China   |
| Silver | YANG Wei    | China   |
| Bronze | VOROBIOV O. | Ukraine |

### ***Women's Un-even Bars***

|        |               |               |
|--------|---------------|---------------|
| Gold   | HE Kexin      | China         |
| Silver | LIUKIN Nastia | United States |
| Bronze | YANG Yilin    | China         |



### ***Men's Vault***

Gold BLANIK Leszek Poland  
 Silver BOUHAIL Thomas France  
 Bronze GOLOTSUTSKOV A. Russian Fed.

### ***Men's Parallel Bars***

Gold LI Xiaopeng China  
 Silver YOO Wonchul Korea  
 Bronze FOKIN Anton Uzbekistan

### ***Women's Beam***

Gold JOHNSON Shawn United States  
 Silver LIUKIN Nastia United States  
 Bronze CHENG Fei China

### ***Men's Horizontal Bar***

Gold ZOU Kai China  
 Silver HORTON Jonathan USA  
 Bronze HAMBUECHEN F. Germany

Also remember there are excellent gymnastic performances to watch on high school and collegiate levels.

## Women's NCAA National Championship 2011



Alabama gymnastics won its fifth NCAA Championship in Cleveland, Ohio, in a down-to-the-wire, edge-of-your-seat competition that saw the Crimson Tide edge defending champion UCLA, 197-650-197.375.

“I cannot say enough about the unity that this team has had,” UA head coach Sarah Patterson said. Alabama was just .025 ahead of the Bruins heading into the final rotation with the Tide headed to the floor exercise and UCLA going to the beam. Alabama finished off with 49.45 led by senior Kayla Hoffman’s meet-best 9.95 while the Bruins scored a 49.200.

This marks coaches Sarah and David Patterson’s fifth NCAA Championship, with the others coming in 2002, 1996, 1991 and 1988. Alabama also won its seventh Southeastern

Conference Championship and 26th NCAA Regional title earlier this season, giving the Tide its first postseason sweep since the 1988 season.

The championship's final rotation was the stuff legends are made of. With Alabama leading by the slimmest possible margin, both teams started the rotation with scores of 9.85. UCLA tied the meet when its second gymnast scored a 9.825 while Alabama scored a 9.8. The Bruins moved ahead by .025 after their third gymnast scored a 9.875 and Alabama answered with a 9.850.



From there though, it was all Alabama. Freshman Diandra Milliner scored a 9.875 to take the lead back and junior Geralen Stack-Eaton and senior Kayla Hoffman closed out the meet and the Bruins by scoring the two highest floor scores of the day, 9.925 and 9.95 respectively.

The Tide set itself up for the title in the fourth rotation when it scored a 49.350 on the balance beam, the second highest total of the weekend, led by freshman Kim Jacob's career-high 9.950, which was also the highest beam score of the weekend.

The Tide closed out its season by winning its last nine meets and posting eight 197-plus scores over the last nine meets. The Tide's winning score from today was its second highest of the season.

## Men's NCAA National Championship 2011



After falling just short a year ago, Stanford came through with the clutch performance necessary to capture its second NCAA title in three years. The Cardinal scored 363.450 to defeat second-place Oklahoma (361.600) and third-place Illinois (360.150).

The NCAA title was also the 100th in Stanford athletics history, as the Cardinal became just the second university to accomplish that feat.

It was the floor exercise where the Cardinal had its best effort of the season. It was this rotation that might have been the difference maker for the national title. The score of



62.450 was the second best in the NCAA this season as Eddie Penev came through with a season-best score of 15.950. Josh Dixon was also outstanding in the event with a 15.850. The depth was the difference though as Tim Gentry (15.350) and Alex Buscaglia (15.300) gave Stanford no weak link.

Stanford men's gymnastics has now won five NCAA titles with the others coming in 1992, 1993, 1995 and 2009. It was the second under head coach Thom Glielmi who took over the program for the 2003 season and has rebuilt Stanford into a perennial title contender.

On the still rings James Fosco and Gentry came through big to give Stanford a score of 60.700. Fosco scored 15.250, before Gentry came through with a huge 15.800 that was the second-highest score of the day. Jordan Nolff (14.850) and Nicholas Noone (14.800) completed the scoring, leaving Stanford in a comfortable spot for the final rotation.

Stanford finished on vault in what surely felt like a victory lap. Ryan Lieberman and Abhinav Ramani opened with solid vaults to help Stanford take the lead, scoring 15.850 and 15.950, respectively. The Cardinal then added to the lead as Dixon scored a 16.000 and then Buscaglia stuck a landing for the top vault of the day with a score of 16.350. Gentry added a 16.250 to give Stanford a score of 64.550, the best of the day and enough for Stanford to win the NCAA title comfortably.

Stay in touch with what is happening in gymnastics by visiting these web sites:

<http://www.ncaa.org>

<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/>



# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET

## GYMNASTICS

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

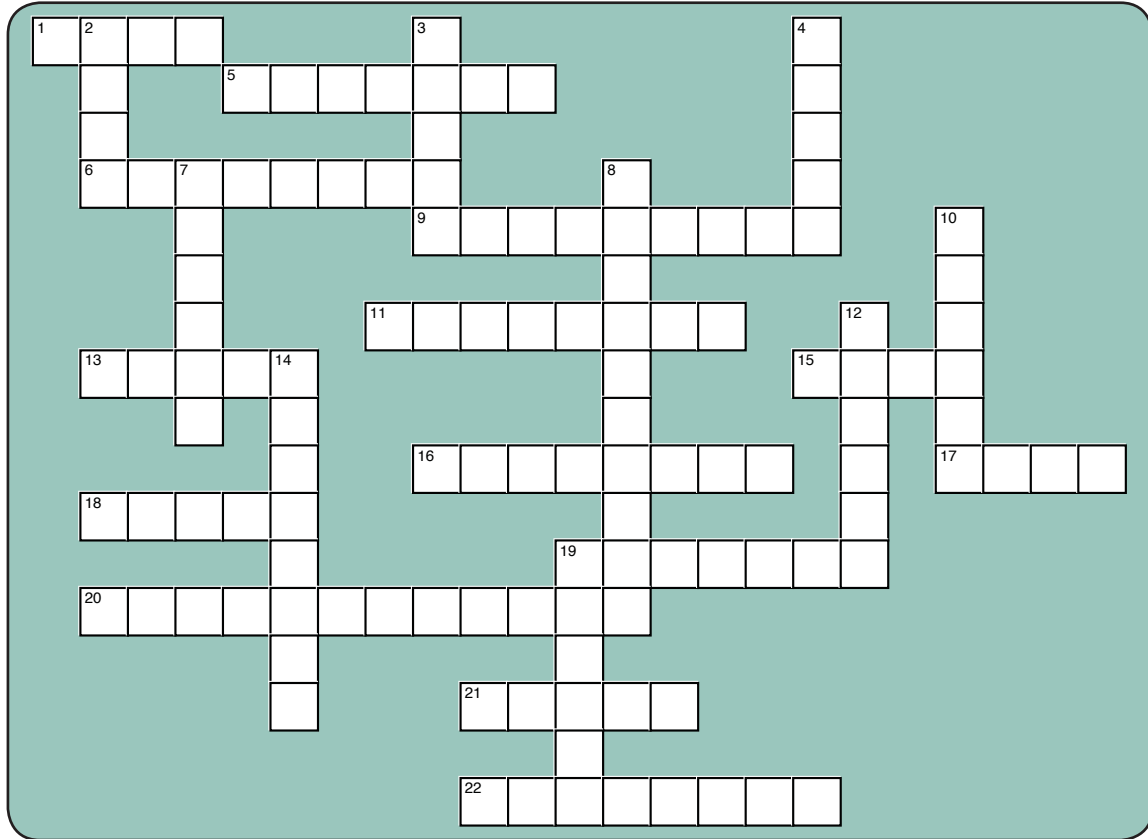
### WHAT TO DO

The following questions will help you to have a greater appreciation and understanding of gymnastics. Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, and write in complete sentences.

1. Why is gymnastics often considered to be the “purest” of all sports or athletic activities?
2. What are some of the physical benefits to be derived from participating in gymnastics?
3. What are the two types of gymnastics most commonly seen in competition and what is the difference between them?
4. Which countries have had a history of dominating the international gymnastics scene and why?

5. What is an “axis”? a “felge”? an “Arab spring”?
  
6. How would you execute a Hecht jump in a gymnastics competition?
  
7. Describe the vault exercise in women’s Olympic competitions. What do the terms “first flight” and “second flight” have to do with this exercise?
  
8. What are the criteria for judging the men’s floor exercises in men’s competitions?
  
9. What is the balance beam exercise test and how is it performed?
  
10. Why must gymnasts begin to train at a very early age?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Across:**

1. Ludwig \_\_\_\_\_ was the founder of gymnastics
5. The inverted giant swing is called a \_\_\_\_\_ giant
6. The legs are apart
9. On the rings, when the feet swing down to touch the floor
11. This has two sections - first and second flight
13. Artistic gymnastics includes a \_\_\_\_\_ exercise
15. This spring is similar to a cartwheel
16. A perfect 10 in 1976
17. The back is rounded with the chin on the chest
18. Jump from higher of two asymmetrical bars
19. This beam is used in women's gymnastics
20. The bars are not at the same height
21. The straddle L position is called a \_\_\_\_\_ right angle
22. Another type of gymnastics

**Down:**

2. Imaginary line around which the body rotates
3. Standard position for doing exercises
4. When one hangs upside down on the parallel bars and lets go, re-grasping the bars
7. This American gymnast helped popularize the sport in 1984
8. The bar used in men's gymnastics
10. The popularity of gymnastics got a boost from her in 1972
12. The body forms a wide back arch in a handstand
14. A type of gymnastics
19. Rhythmic gymnastics includes movement similar to this type of dance

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Find these words in the above puzzle. Circle the words.

Gymnastics

NFSHSA

Rhythmic

Greece

Axis

Asymmetrical

Turnverein

Felge

Horse

Rings

Tuck

Leotards

Handsprings

Retton

Costumes

AAU

Vaulting

Vault

Artistic