

SAFE
& FAIR
SPORT

Safeguarding Policy

TRAINING + HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES



V1/MAR 2025

British
Gymnastics



GYMNASTICS
NORTHERN
IRELAND



Welsh Gymnastics
Gymnasteg Cymru

What's included in the Safeguarding Policy:

TRAINING + HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

- Introduction
- Considerations for Planning and Programming Training
- Recovery Strategies
- Monitoring and Evaluating Training

Introduction

- Everyone in gymnastics has a responsibility to create a safe and uplifting gymnastics experience for all. The Safeguarding Policy: Training & Holistic Development outlines the mandatory points which clubs and coaches must follow to ensure safe practices around training and holistic development are implemented.
- This guidance has been developed to supplement the Safeguarding Policy: Training & Holistic Development. The purpose of this guidance is to provide clubs with further information to empower them to apply good practice.

Useful links

www.ukcoaching.org/holistic-coaching

[Nutrition Guidance for Good Practice](#)

[Gymnast Development Plan Template](#)

[Pain, Injury & Illness Guidance for Good Practice](#)

Considerations for Planning and Programming Training



When planning and programming training, the following aspects should be considered and applied.

Training Principles

Specificity

Training must be specific to ultimately improve performance and reduce the risk of injury. This can include similar movement patterns, using similar muscles and/or creating similar psychological situations.

Progressive Overload

For adaptations to occur, the physiological systems in the body need to be overloaded, i.e., the body needs to work harder than normal. Any overload should be done progressively (i.e., small increments) to reduce the risk of fatigue or injury. Progressive overload can be achieved using the FITT principle.

FITT

Frequency

Frequency refers to the amount of training sessions completed each week.

Intensity

The intensity of training refers to how hard the body is working. The intensity of exercise can be increased by adding more repetitions, sets, heavier weights, working at a higher percentage of heart rate or decreasing the rest time between repetitions.

Time

Time refers to the duration of an individual session.

Type

The type of training can vary depending on the requirements. Examples in gymnastics may be technical training, flexibility training or strength and conditioning training.

Individualisation

Training should be specific to an individual's needs in order to improve performance and reduce the risk of injury.

Recovery

An important aspect of training is rest and recovery. Rest and recovery following prescribed training is crucial for adaptations to occur. It is also important for the mind to have a rest from the demands of training.

Tedium

Tedium can occur when training lacks variety, lacks fun or is too repetitive. This can result in low motivation, boredom and can increase the risk of overuse injury. It is important to use a variety of training methods and coaching styles.

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Training Cycles

When planning training over a period of time, it is useful to map out the different training cycles and phases to help achieve training goals.

Macrocycle

This represents the training plan designed to achieve a specific goal. Usually this is done annually in gymnastics.

Mesocycle

A macrocycle can be broken into different phases which often range from 2–6 weeks. Examples of this could be skill development or preparatory phase, competition preparation, tapering and transition phase.

Microcycle

Each mesocycle can be split into microcycles. In gymnastics, this is usually a weekly training programme.

It is important that the intensity of each training session during a weekly training programme is varied to allow the body to adapt, recover and reduce the risk of injury, overtraining and burnout.

It is also important to consider how different training modalities and/or intensities may impact each other. Examples to consider include:

- Flexibility training should always be done towards the end of a training session to reduce the impact on power-based skills.
- Consider the impact of a heavy strength session on technical training.

Training Factors

Weekly training programmes should ensure that the following factors are included:

Tactical

All measures that are taken to ensure a successful competition performance (i.e. routine construction).

Artistic

The postural and aesthetic aspects required for the performance.

Technical

Assessment of a gymnast's technical performance to identify areas to develop.

Physical

The physical preparation components that are most important to the discipline/gymnast.

Psychological

The psychological components that support the gymnast's ability to develop and perform.

Growth, Maturation and Development

When planning any training, it is important to consider the age, and the stage of growth, maturation and development of each individual gymnast.

Consider the following areas that change as a result of growth, maturation and development when planning a gymnast's training programme:

- **Growth**
Examples include changes in stature and body composition.
- **Physical**
Changes in physical and functional qualities. Examples include changes in strength, power, flexibility and endurance.
- **Motor**
The development of movement patterns and skills. Where crude, uncoordinated movements progress to skilled, autonomous movement patterns.
- **Perceptual**
Examples include improvements in spatial, directional and timing awareness.
- **Cognitive**
Examples include the development of logical thinking, processing information, reasoning, abstract thinking and memory.
- **Psychosocial**
Examples include the development of personality, relationships, social skills, self-worth and self-confidence.

Adolescence

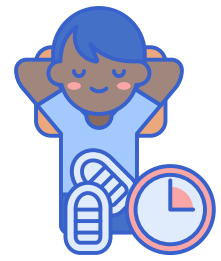
Adolescence is a time where the body is changing rapidly, both physically and psychologically. Here are some examples of how these changes may impact a gymnast:

- During periods of rapid growth (often known as growth spurts), gymnasts are at an increased risk of injury – particularly growth-related and overuse injuries (e.g. Severs, Osgood-Schlatters, stress fractures in the back).
- Gymnasts may temporarily lose skills as they adjust to their new body.
- Gymnasts may be more aware of the physical changes occurring to their body which can affect their self-esteem, impacting on their relationship with food and mental health.
- Gymnasts will also experience changes in brain development and, as a result, may show a wide range of emotions during this time.
- Female gymnasts will be navigating the start of their menstrual cycles, which can affect their capacity, energy and motivation to train.

Training and competition may need to be modified during adolescence. This could include reducing the volume or intensity of sessions, modifying skills, withdrawing from a competition, more physical preparation (strength-based exercises), more recovery and relearning movement patterns/skills.

In addition, encourage gymnasts to communicate when they are in any pain, specifically around the joints (See [**Pain, Injury & Illness Guidance for Good Practice on our supporting resources pages**](#)).

Recovery Strategies



Recovery, both physically and mentally, is an integral part of training and allows for adaptations to occur. It also reduces the risk of injury, overtraining and burnout (more information on this can be found in ['How do I know what the right amount of training is?' infographic in the Safeguarding Policy: Training & Holistic Development](#)). There are lots of different aspects to recovery, here are some strategies that can be used.

Nutrition

Post-training nutrition is a key part of recovering optimally. It helps the body to refuel, repair and rehydrate. More information, including food ideas and optimal timings can be found in the ['Nutrition Guidance for Good Practice'](#) document.

Physical

Physical recovery can be split into active and passive strategies.

- Active recovery strategies can aid with the removal of waste products in the muscle (lactate and hydrogen ions) and therefore reduce muscle fatigue. Examples post training include: 10 – 20 minutes of gentle cycling/ slow shuffle jog/swimming at a low intensity, foam/pulse roller or guns to release any areas of muscle tightness, stretching and mobility to restore muscle length and joint range.
- Passive recovery strategies can also aid with the removal of waste products (e.g. compression garments such as socks or arm sleeves) or reduce muscle soreness (e.g. icing and sports massage*).

*Sports massages should be used minimally and when required.

NOTE: The use of ice baths, Normatec (compression therapy) and electrical stimulation can also aid recovery but should be used where the focus is optimising recovery over training adaptations (e.g. during the final stages of competition preparation).

Sleep

Sleep is an important part of recovery; it is when the body tissues repair and build and consolidate skill development into memory. To promote the importance of sleep for recovery, ensure training sessions don't finish too late.

Sometimes focusing too much on the details of sleep, such as quantity and quality can create more stress and impact sleep itself, instead it is better to promote good practices to encourage a good night's sleep.

Here are some good strategies to help get a good night's sleep:

- Ensure the room is dark.
- Ensure the room temperature is optimal for the individual.
- Develop a good bedtime routine.
- Avoid screens one hour before bedtime.
- Avoid products that contain caffeine 4–5 hours before bed. For those sensitive to caffeine with poor sleep, caffeine may need to be avoided up to 12 hours before bed.
- Try a bath before bedtime.
- Avoid going to bed hungry. A high carbohydrate meal can aid sleep.
- Avoid drinking large volumes of fluid within the hour before bed, as sleep can be disrupted with the need to go to the toilet throughout the night.

Psychological/Mental

Engaging with different activities outside of gymnastics can help develop a gymnast's identity outside of the sport whilst encouraging mental health and wellbeing. It can also help a gymnast focus and concentrate on gymnastics when it matters. Research also shows that having a broader identity can positively impact performance.

Here are some examples that can support psychological/mental recovery:

- Playing a musical instrument.
- Relaxing using mindfulness.
- Further education.
- Engaging with friends and family outside of gymnastics can give the mind a well-earned rest from the demands of training.

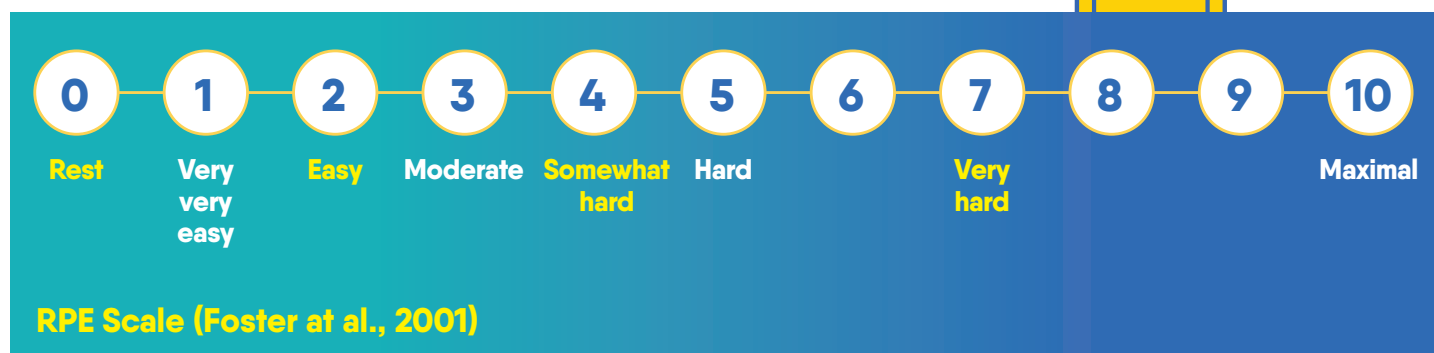
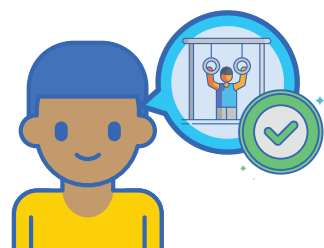
Monitoring and Evaluating Training

Monitoring and evaluating training can help support and adapt training plans. Some of the benefits include:

- **Response to training**
Understand how a gymnast has found a training session, how they responded to a training stimulus and did it have the desired outcome.
- **Adapting training**
Identify times where a training session may need adapting. Does the gymnast need more recovery time or changes to training?
- **Assist with decision making**
Identify whether a gymnast has completed enough training for a competition or new skill. Is the risk of injury higher than success?
- **Evaluate training plans**
Evaluate whether a block of training was successful. Was it completed; did it have the desired outcome?
- **Assist with planning**
Use previous plans to help guide the development of future training plans and periodisation, whilst building a training history. Help with injury risk and return to training.

Although there is no 'gold-standard' method of measuring training load and readiness in gymnastics, there are three variables that should all be used to monitor training load and readiness to train effectively: External load, Internal load and Training Response and Wellness.

- **External load**
This measure is the physical work completed, e.g., skills, repetitions, total difficulty, number of routines. Monitoring external load can especially be useful for understanding what has been done and planning future sessions.
- **Internal load**
This measure is useful for understanding individual experiences of prescribed training and can help coaches modify training accordingly. Examples of internal load measures include heart rate, rate of perceived exertion (RPE), session or apparatus/activity duration RPE.
- **Response & Wellness**
This measures the response to the previous training load(s) as well as any other variables that may influence the next training session, e.g., soreness/pain, tiredness and stress. It's most useful to capture this before a training session to help adjust training if necessary. There are lots of different wellness markers that can be collected, some of which may be more age appropriate.



RPE is where a gymnast rates how hard a session or an activity was out of 10, where 0 is rest and 10 is maximal. It is a quick, simple, reliable and cheap way of measuring internal load.

Application

Here are some ways you can monitor and evaluate training in your club and help adjust training accordingly. To encourage gymnast buy-in, it is recommended that you start small and consider what would be useful information to collect, taking into account the gymnasts you work with.

Example 1. Internal & External load

Print off a training plan for each gymnast. Each gymnast can then edit their training plan according to what they have completed and add an RPE score for each activity/apparatus. Younger gymnasts may need more support until they become confident enough to complete by themselves.

Encourage older gymnasts to complete training diaries (or online equivalent), this way they can take accountability for their training.

How can I use this data?

Understanding what training has actually been completed will help when evaluating training programmes. Use the RPE score to understand how a gymnast has experienced training and whether it is as expected/desired and modify future training if required.

Example 2. Internal & External load

For each apparatus/activity, ask each gymnast to write the time (mins) and a RPE for each activity/apparatus. This can be collected on premade templates or in training diaries (or online equivalent). Younger gymnasts may need more support until they become confident enough to complete by themselves.

How can I use this data?

Use the RPE score to understand how a gymnast has experienced training and whether it is as expected/desired and modify future training if required. This can also stimulate feedback and conversation.

In addition, the time for each activity/apparatus can be multiplied by the RPE for each apparatus/activity (often known as session-RPE) and can be totalled for each day and week to give a measure of a gymnast's internal load. Overtime this can be useful to spot sudden increases (i.e., not progressive overload) in training load and adapt training accordingly.

The benefit of multiplying the time by the RPE is that different modes of training in a single session, day or across a week, can be added together to create a picture of overall training load within a period of time. For example, trampoline training and strength and conditioning training.

Example 3. Training Response & Wellness

Ask each gymnast to rate markers such as muscle soreness, mental stress and tiredness between 1-5 or 1-10. The most useful time to do this is just before the start of a training session and can be done as easily as pointing to a chart or on an online form.

How can I use this data?

This data can be used to stimulate conversation, assess a gymnast's readiness to train and identify whether planned training or coaching style needs to be modified.

Any responses that are abnormal should feed into two-way discussions and decisions regarding upcoming training or competition.