



Safe Travel Practices

Empowering Clubs, Elevating Coaches, Inspiring Gymnasts.

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1.Introduction



Purpose of the Document

This document aims to provide comprehensive guidance to gymnastics clubs and coaches on how to conduct safe and responsible trips. Ensuring the safety and well-being of participants is of utmost importance.

Importance of Safety in Gymnastics Trips

Gymnastics involves physical activities that can carry inherent risks. Proper planning, risk management, and adherence to safety protocols are essential to prevent accidents and injuries during trips.

2.Planning the Trip



Identifying Objectives and Activities

Establish the purpose of the trip (e.g., competition, training camp, or team-building) and outline the activities planned. Consider the age and skill levels of participants when selecting activities.

Selecting Locations and Facilities

Choose venues that meet safety standards and are equipped to handle gymnastics activities. Ensure facilities are appropriate for the group's skill levels and needs.

Risk Assessment and Management

Conduct a thorough risk assessment to identify potential hazards associated with transportation, accommodation, and activities. Implement measures to mitigate these risks

Example Risk Assessment for Gymnastics Trips

1. Identify the Hazards

- Transportation: Risks during travel (e.g., vehicle accidents, driver fatigue).
- Accommodation: Safety risks in lodging (e.g., fire hazards, inadequate first aid supplies).
- Activities: Potential injuries during gymnastics activities (e.g., falls, equipment failures).
- Environmental factors: Weather conditions affecting outdoor activities (e.g., slippery surfaces, extreme heat).

2. Decide Who Might Be Harmed and How

- Gymnasts: Risk of physical injury (e.g., sprains, fractures).
- Coaches: Potential for injury while supervising activities.

- Support staff: Risks during travel or while managing logistics.

3. Evaluate the Risks and Decide on Control Measures

- **Transportation:**
 - Ensure all vehicles are roadworthy and that drivers are qualified and rested.
 - Conduct a pre-departure safety briefing.
- **Accommodation:**
 - Select lodgings with adequate fire safety measures and first aid facilities.
 - Brief all participants on evacuation routes and safety protocols.
- **Activities:**
 - Use properly maintained equipment and ensure safe setups.
 - Implement strict supervision ratios (e.g., one coach for every ten gymnasts).
- **Environmental Factors:**
 - Monitor weather conditions and adjust plans accordingly.
 - Have contingency plans for extreme weather (e.g., indoor alternatives).

Record Your Findings

- **Document the identified hazards, risks, and control measures in a formal risk assessment template. This should include:**
 - The nature of the risk
 - Who may be harmed
 - Existing controls
 - Additional actions needed
 - Person responsible for implementing measures
 - Review dates

Overnight stays and/or Travelling abroad

If the trip involves an overnight stay or takes place abroad, there are additional considerations and extensive planning required. Clubs or organisations should designate a Trip/Team Manager, who will be responsible for ensuring that all necessary arrangements are made for a successful journey. Permission and consent forms must be obtained from at least four weeks prior to the trip if it includes an overnight stay.

Membership with Independent Gymnastics (IGA) does not include travel insurance. When planning trips abroad, it is essential to obtain additional insurance.

Review Your Assessment

- Regularly review and update the risk assessment, especially if there are changes in activities, participants, or locations.
- After any incidents, conduct a debrief to assess what went wrong and how similar risks can be mitigated in the future

Safeguarding

Independent Gymnastics (IGA) requires that clubs or affiliated organisations taking gymnasts under the age of 18 on trips involving an overnight stay appoint a designated Traveling Welfare Officer. This individual is responsible for safeguarding and protecting children. However, this requirement does not apply if all children are accompanied by a parent or someone with parental responsibility.

The Traveling Welfare Officer must fulfil this role without any conflicts of interest, such as being a coach or having a personal relationship with a coach attending the trip. All welfare officers must hold IGA membership and have completed the necessary criminal record checks and training as stipulated by IGA.

The specific responsibilities of the welfare officer will depend on the size and scope of the trip. In addition to addressing any concerns, tasks may include supervising and coordinating accommodation, conducting pre-event welfare briefings, daily debriefs, and ensuring adherence to codes of conduct. For further details, refer to IGA's safeguarding guidance documents.

In non-residential trips or events, the welfare officer does not have to be on-site with the group but must be reachable and ready to act if necessary. This role may also be assigned to an existing staff member or volunteer, provided that the individual can take a child-centered approach and earns the trust of the young participants. For representative events, a trained Head of Delegation may assume this role, but a thorough risk assessment must be conducted to ensure they can adequately fulfil this responsibility alongside their other duties.

Individual Needs

Parents have a responsibility to provide essential information about their child that may be relevant to managing the trip. The parent or the participant (if they are adults) should confirm the following details:

- Any disabilities, special needs, medical conditions, recent illnesses, pregnancy, or recent childbirth
- Information regarding any allergies, dietary restrictions, and other pertinent details about the participant, such as phobias or travel sickness
- The participant's competency level concerning any planned activities, such as swimming
- Any additional information they believe is important
- Emergency contact details

New and Expecting Mothers

If any participant on the trip is a new or expectant mother, it is necessary to complete a risk assessment form specifically for new or expectant mothers. An example of this form can be found in the Independent Gymnastics Documentation.

This assessment is crucial for identifying and addressing any potential risks associated with the trip, ensuring the health and safety of the individual involved. For further details, refer to the relevant IGA documentation.

Accommodation

It is not good practice for anyone over the age of eighteen to share a room with anyone under the age of sixteen. Members of staff such as coaches, instructors, judges, adult unqualified assistants/volunteers must not share with gymnasts. This is only acceptable if the member of staff is the parent or registered carer of the gymnast. Room allocation should, if possible, be planned

3. Legal and Compliance Considerations



Understanding Legal Responsibilities

Familiarise yourself with local laws regarding youth travel, safety regulations, and the legal responsibilities of coaches and clubs.

Obtaining Necessary Permits and Insurance

Apply for any required travel permits and ensure adequate insurance coverage for participants during the trip. This includes liability insurance that covers all planned activities.

Adhering to Health and Safety Regulations

Follow the relevant health and safety guidelines from national governing bodies and local authorities to ensure compliance with regulations related to sports activities.

Specific Laws and Regulations:

1. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA)

Context: This act lays the foundation for workplace health and safety laws in the UK, applying to all employers, including those in sports organizations. Under this law, clubs must ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees and anyone else who might be affected by their activities, including young athletes during trips. This includes ensuring safe transportation and accommodation.

- **Key Requirements:**

- **Conduct risk assessments for travel and activities.**
- **Provide adequate supervision and training for staff.**

2. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Context: These regulations support the HSWA by specifying the need for employers to assess risks, implement safety measures, and provide training. For gymnastics clubs, this means being proactive in ensuring that all potential hazards associated with travel and activities are identified and mitigated.

- **Key Requirements:**

- **Regularly review and update risk assessments.**
- **Ensure all staff are trained in emergency procedures.**

3. The Children Act 1989 and 2004

Context: This legislation emphasises the welfare of children and young people in England and Wales. It mandates that organisations working with children have a duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities. For gymnastics clubs, this includes obtaining parental consent for trips and ensuring that staff are vetted and trained in safeguarding practices.

- **Key Requirements:**

- **Conduct background checks (DBS checks) for all adults working with minors.**
- **Establish clear safeguarding policies and procedures.**

4. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Context: This act complements the Children Act by creating a framework for vetting individuals who work with vulnerable groups, including children in sports settings. It's critical for gymnastics clubs to ensure that all staff and volunteers have undergone the necessary checks to prevent any risk to participants.

- **Key Requirements:**
 - **Implement robust recruitment procedures.**
 - **Regularly train staff on safeguarding and child protection.**

5. The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

Context: This regulation requires employers to report specific work-related accidents, injuries, and dangerous occurrences to the HSE. For gymnastics clubs, this means reporting any incidents that occur during travel or training that could affect participants' health and safety.

- **Key Requirements:**
 - **Document and report significant incidents as required.**
 - **Maintain records of injuries and incidents for review.**

6. Insurance Requirements

Context: While not a law per se, having adequate insurance coverage is essential for gymnastics clubs to protect against potential claims arising from accidents or injuries during trips. This includes public liability insurance and specific coverage for activities undertaken during travel.

- **Key Requirements:**
 - **Ensure insurance policies cover all planned activities and venues.**
 - **Regularly review insurance policies to match the activities undertaken.**

7. Local Authority Regulations

Context: Depending on the location, local authorities may have specific regulations regarding the transport of children, especially concerning vehicle safety standards and the qualifications of drivers. Clubs must familiarise themselves with these regulations when planning transportation.

- **Key Requirements:**

- **Verify compliance with local transportation laws.**
- **Ensure that any vehicles used for transporting participants meet safety standards.**

4. Transportation Safety



Arranging Safe Transportation Options

When a club transports gymnasts from their regular training venue to competitions, squad training, festivals, or other events, several additional health, safety, and welfare considerations must be taken into account. For local events, it is often simplest for everyone to meet directly at the venue. However, for events that are further away, it is usually advisable for the club to organise group transportation, such as a coach or mini-bus.

If the club is responsible for arranging transportation, a driving risk assessment must be conducted. As part of this process, clubs should ensure the following measures are completed:

- Verify all driving licenses, car insurance documents, and MOT certificates (for vehicles over three years old).
- Assess the driving experience of individuals, noting that additional training may be required for those driving mini-buses (contact the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for more information).
- Ensure that anyone driving children has completed a criminal record check.
- Confirm that each passenger has a seatbelt available in the vehicle.
- Make certain that the transportation is accessible for participants with physical disabilities.
- Organise central pick-up and drop-off points to avoid any driver being alone with a child.
- Obtain consent from parents for their children to be transported.
- Provide parents with details about the route and any necessary breaks.

For smaller groups, traveling in a private car may be the most feasible option, although this is generally not recommended. It is important to remember that IGA's safeguarding policy prohibits any members in a position of trust from being alone in a vehicle with a gymnast under the age of 18.

Conducting Safety Briefings for Participants

Before the trip, hold a safety briefing to inform participants about transportation protocols, expected behaviour, and emergency procedures during travel.

Monitoring Travel Conditions

Stay informed about travel conditions (weather, traffic) and adjust travel plans as necessary to ensure safety.

First Aid

A first aid kit should be taken on every trip, along with a list of emergency contact numbers for all participants. Whenever possible, it is recommended that at least one adult accompanying the group has up-to-date training in emergency first aid. This preparation is crucial for ensuring that any injuries or health issues can be promptly addressed.

In most cases, access to first aid resources is also available through hotels, transport providers (such as airlines), and event organisers. These facilities often have their own protocols and trained personnel to assist in case of emergencies

5. Communication Strategies



Informing Parents and Guardians

Provide parents with a detailed itinerary, including departure and arrival times, activities planned, and contact information for coaches.

Detailed Itinerary

Providing parents with a comprehensive itinerary is crucial for ensuring transparency and fostering trust. The itinerary should include:

- **Departure and Arrival Times:** Clearly outline when the group will leave and return, including any relevant time zone changes for trips abroad. This helps parents plan accordingly and ensures they know when to expect their children.
- **Activities Planned:** Include a list of scheduled activities, such as training sessions, competitions, or leisure time. This allows parents to understand what their children will be doing throughout the trip and prepare them mentally for the experience.
- **Contact Information for Coaches:** Provide parents with contact details for all coaches and team officials who will be accompanying the participants. This allows parents to reach out if they have questions or need to communicate urgent information.

Pre-Trip Meetings and Consent Forms

Organising meetings with parents and guardians is an effective way to address any concerns they may have and to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding trip arrangements. During these meetings, you should:

- **Discuss Trip Details:** Outline the itinerary, safety measures, and the roles of the adults accompanying the group. This can help alleviate concerns about supervision and safety.
- **Address Concerns:** Encourage parents to voice any worries they may have about the trip, whether related to travel arrangements, accommodations, or the well-being of their children. Engaging in open dialogue fosters trust and collaboration.

- **Collect Consent Forms:** Use these meetings to gather signed consent forms from parents. This formalizes their agreement to allow their children to participate and ensures they are aware of all planned activities. A pre-made travel consent form can be found on IGA's Insight Hub under "GymPro Resources," which simplifies this process for clubs.

Emergency Contact Information

It is essential to ensure that all participants have easy access to emergency contact information throughout the trip. This should include:

- **Emergency Contact Numbers:** Provide a list of phone numbers for coaches, club officials, and other key personnel. This way, participants know whom to contact in case of an emergency.
- **Local Emergency Services:** Make sure participants are aware of local emergency numbers (e.g., 999 in the UK) and the location of nearby medical facilities. This is particularly important for trips abroad where emergency procedures may differ.
- **Communication Plan:** Establish a communication plan that outlines how participants can contact their parents or guardians if necessary. This may include the use of mobile phones, messaging apps, or designated times for check-ins.

By taking these steps to inform parents and guardians, clubs can enhance the overall safety and well-being of participants, build trust within the community, and ensure a successful trip. For further guidance on best practices for parental communication, refer to resources provided by organisations like the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Independent Gymnastics (IGA).

6. Supervision and Coaching Guidelines



Staffing Ratios and Responsibilities

Maintain appropriate staff-to-participant ratios: a minimum of one adult to 10 children. This ratio may need to be increased if the group is made up of primary school aged children, or children with special

needs; or the trip is of a nature where more supervision may be required, e.g. trips abroad. If the group is mixed sex there should be at least one male and one female supervisor. There should always be at least two adults accompanying any group. If the group included people with special needs, there may be some specific skill requirements of supervisors that need to be considered. In some cases parents or designated carers may need to be included

Children under-8

IGA strongly recommends that clubs do not take children under-8 away abroad or overnight unless their parent/s or someone with legal parental responsibility can accompany them on the trip. This is because younger children are likely to require higher levels of supervision and may need some assistance with elements of personal care that would not be normally be required during the day. It is also quite likely that children of a young age may not have gone away without a parent.

In the event that a club is considering taking a child under-8 on a trip abroad, or overnight, the trip organiser should ensure the risk assessment specifically addresses any additional hazards associated with younger children's needs. The club must be confident that suitable and sufficient controls/safeguards are in place before allowing an under-8 child to attend. If the event is of a competitive nature, the club must ensure the competition is at an appropriate level for the age of the child.

Coach Qualifications and Training

Ensure all coaches have the necessary qualifications, including training in child protection, first aid, and safety management

Emergency Procedures and First Aid Training

Establish clear emergency procedures and ensure that coaches are trained to handle medical emergencies, including administering first aid

Codes of Conduct

All participants (including staff and volunteers) and their parents, if the participants are under 16, should be required to sign a code of conduct. They must also be informed of the potential consequences for failing to adhere to the expected standards of behavior, which may include exclusion from activities or disciplinary actions.

It is advisable to hold a trip briefing meeting for participants and/or their parents to review all arrangements and address any questions prior to traveling abroad or staying overnight. This practice helps ensure that everyone is clear on expectations and responsibilities, fostering a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

7. Health and Safety Protocols



Health Screening for Participants

Conducting health assessments for all participants before the trip is essential to ensure they are physically fit for the planned activities. This screening should include:

- **Medical History Review:** Collect detailed medical histories to identify any existing conditions, disabilities, or recent illnesses that could affect a participant's ability to engage in physical activities. This information should be documented and shared with coaches and relevant personnel.
- **Physical Fitness Assessment:** Consider implementing a fitness assessment tailored to the activities planned for the trip. This could include evaluating endurance, strength, and flexibility, especially for intense or specialised activities like gymnastics. This assessment can help coaches determine if any participants may require modified activities or additional support.
- **Communication with Parents and Guardians:** Engage parents in the health screening process by requiring them to provide any relevant information about their child's health. This can help ensure that all necessary precautions are taken and that everyone is informed about participants' capabilities and needs .

Nutrition and Hydration Guidelines

Planning for adequate meals and hydration is crucial, particularly during physically demanding activities. Key considerations include:

- **Meal Planning:** Develop a meal plan that includes balanced nutrition, focusing on carbohydrates for energy, proteins for muscle repair, and healthy fats. Meals should also incorporate fruits and vegetables for vitamins and minerals. Working with a nutritionist or dietitian can help ensure that meals meet the specific needs of young athletes .
- **Hydration Strategies:** Establish a hydration plan that encourages participants to drink water regularly before, during, and after activities. Provide water stations and electrolyte drinks, especially during intense physical exertion or in hot weather. Educate participants about the signs of dehydration and the importance of maintaining fluid intake .
- **Dietary Restrictions:** Take into account any dietary restrictions or allergies participants may have. Collect this information during the health screening process and ensure that meal options are available for those with specific needs

Managing Medical Needs and Emergencies

Having a well-defined plan for managing participants' medical needs is critical for ensuring their safety during the trip. Key components of this plan should include:

- **Medication Management:** Ensure that participants carry all necessary medications, such as asthma inhalers, allergy medications, or any other prescriptions. Create a system for tracking medication usage and ensuring that participants take their medications as required
- **Access to Medical Assistance:** Identify local medical facilities or services near the trip location in case of emergencies. Provide participants with information on how to access these services and include this information in pre-trip briefings
- **Emergency Response Plan:** Develop a comprehensive emergency response plan that outlines procedures for dealing with injuries or medical emergencies. This plan should include the following:
 - Designated First Aid Personnel: Ensure that at least one adult on the trip is trained in first aid and CPR. This individual should be easily identifiable and ready to assist in case of medical emergencies.
 - Emergency Contact Protocol: Establish a protocol for notifying parents or guardians in the event of a medical emergency. Ensure that all coaches have access to emergency contact information for each participant .

8. Conducting the Trip



Safety Briefings and Briefings for Activities

Conducting safety briefings at the beginning of each day and before specific activities is essential for reinforcing safety protocols and ensuring participants are well-informed about potential risks. These briefings should include:

- **Overview of Safety Protocols:** Begin each day with a review of the general safety rules and guidelines that all participants must follow. This could include instructions on how to use equipment safely, rules for behavior during activities, and protocols for reporting any injuries or incidents.
- **Activity-Specific Safety Instructions:** Before starting each activity, provide detailed instructions related to the specific risks and safety measures associated with that activity. For instance, when engaging in gymnastics, emphasise the importance of proper technique, using spotters, and understanding equipment limits. This helps participants understand the unique challenges of each activity and prepares them to manage risks effectively .
- **Emergency Procedures:** Clearly outline the procedures to follow in case of an emergency, such as what to do if someone gets injured or how to evacuate the area if necessary. Make sure participants know where the first aid kit is located and who the designated first aid personnel are .

Monitoring Participant Behavior

Close supervision of participants throughout the trip is vital for ensuring adherence to safety rules and guidelines. This can be achieved through:

- **Staff-to-Participant Ratios:** Maintain an appropriate staff-to-participant ratio to ensure that all participants can be monitored effectively. This may vary depending on the nature of the activities being undertaken and the ages of the participants.
- **Active Engagement:** Staff members should remain actively engaged with participants, moving around the area, interacting with them, and monitoring behaviour. Encourage staff to be approachable so participants feel comfortable reporting any safety concerns or asking for help .

- **Behaviour Management:** Implement strategies for managing behaviour that may pose safety risks, such as roughhousing or ignoring instructions. Clearly communicate the consequences for unsafe behaviour, which can help deter participants from taking unnecessary risks .

Adapting Plans as Necessary

Flexibility is crucial when managing trips, as unforeseen circumstances can arise that may require changes to the planned itinerary. Key strategies include:

- **Weather Contingency Plans:** Always have backup plans in place for activities that could be affected by changes in weather. For example, if a planned outdoor activity cannot proceed due to rain, have an alternative indoor activity ready. Regularly check weather forecasts leading up to and during the trip to make informed decisions .
- **Health and Safety Adjustments:** Be prepared to adapt plans based on participants' health and safety needs. For instance, if a participant falls ill or has a medical emergency, ensure there is a procedure in place to adjust group activities accordingly, such as providing additional supervision for the affected individual or altering the group's schedule .
- **Communication with Parents:** Keep parents informed of any significant changes in plans. This transparency helps maintain trust and allows parents to feel involved in the decision-making process regarding their children's safety .

9. Post-Trip Review and Evaluation



Collecting feedback from both participants and coaches after a trip is essential for evaluating the overall experience and identifying areas for improvement. This process can be structured in several ways:

- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Utilise surveys to gather structured feedback from participants and coaches. Include questions about various aspects of the trip, such as safety, organisation, activities, and overall satisfaction. This can help quantify experiences and pinpoint specific areas

needing improvement . Online tools like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey can streamline this process.

- **Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage participants and coaches to provide open-ended feedback, allowing them to express their opinions and suggestions freely. This can uncover valuable insights into what worked well and what aspects of the trip could be enhanced for future events.

Gathering this feedback not only improves future trips but also fosters a sense of community and engagement among participants and staff. It demonstrates that their opinions are valued, which can enhance the overall experience of future events.

Reviewing Safety Procedures and Outcomes

Analysing incidents that occurred during the trip is crucial for refining safety procedures and enhancing future planning. Steps in this process include:

- **Incident Reports:** Document any incidents or near-misses that occurred during the trip, including the nature of the incident, the response taken, and the outcome. This documentation should be thorough and objective, providing a clear understanding of what happened.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** Conduct a root cause analysis for any incidents to identify underlying issues. Consider questions like: Were safety protocols followed? Were participants adequately prepared? Did external factors contribute to the incident? Understanding these aspects can help clubs modify their safety procedures effectively .
- **Engagement of Staff and Participants:** Involve coaches and participants in the review process. They can provide firsthand insights into the incidents, which can be invaluable in understanding how to prevent similar occurrences in the future.
- **Updating Safety Protocols:** Based on the review of incidents and feedback, revise safety procedures and guidelines accordingly. This could involve implementing additional training, revising trip itineraries, or enhancing equipment safety checks to mitigate identified risks.

Documenting Lessons Learned for Future Trips

Keeping a record of lessons learned and suggestions for improvements is essential for continuous development in trip planning. Consider the following practices:

- **Trip Evaluation Reports:** After each trip, create a comprehensive evaluation report summarising the trip's outcomes, including feedback from participants and coaches, incident analyses, and safety reviews. This document serves as a historical record that can guide future planning efforts.
- **Best Practices Repository:** Develop a centralised repository of best practices and lessons learned that can be easily accessed by all staff involved in trip planning. This could include tips for effective communication, safety measures, and participant engagement strategies.
- **Regular Review Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings to discuss and review the documented lessons learned. Encourage staff to share their experiences and insights, creating a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation. This collaborative approach can foster innovation in trip planning.

- **Integrating Feedback into Future Planning:** Ensure that the feedback and lessons learned are actively integrated into the planning process for future trips. This not only enhances safety and participant experience but also builds trust among participants and parents, showing that their input leads to tangible improvements.