



# Group & Class Management Guidance:

**Guidance and Advice**

Empowering Clubs, Elevating Coaches, Inspiring Gymnasts.

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# 1.Introduction

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At the Independent Gymnastics Association (IGA), we strive to support coaches and clubs in providing the best possible gymnastics experience. A structured, well-managed class helps athletes progress, stay engaged, and most importantly, enjoy their training. This guide offers practical advice and tools for running classes effectively, focusing on group management, skill development, and maintaining a positive atmosphere in your gym. Implementing these strategies will lead to a more organised and enjoyable experience for both coaches and gymnasts.

## 2. Clear Structure & Routine

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A clear, consistent class routine is essential for maintaining discipline and focus. Here's how to ensure your classes are well-structured:

- **Set Expectations:** Start each term by outlining behavior expectations and class goals. Display these rules on a visible board in the gym and review them at the start of each session to reinforce understanding.

### Class Rotation Plan Template

#### 1. Warm-up (10 minutes):

- Use dynamic stretches, light cardio, and mobility exercises to prepare the body for activity.
- Tailor warm-ups to the focus of the session (e.g., flexibility for a beam session, strength for vault).
- Conduct warm-ups in one large group, ensuring all athletes are engaged and ready.

#### 2. Rotation Plan for Skill Development:

- **Create a Schedule:**
  - Divide the gym into stations for different apparatus (e.g., beam, floor, bars, vault).
  - Assign groups to each station based on skill level or age group.
  - Plan rotations with a set time limit.
- **Example Rotation Plan:**
  - Group 1 (Advanced): Start at Vault → Bars → Beam → Floor.
  - Group 2 (Intermediate): Start at Bars → Beam → Floor → Vault.
  - Group 3 (Beginners): Start at Floor → Vault → Bars → Beam.
- Post this rotation plan on a visible board for coaches and athletes to follow.
- Include detailed instructions for each station to ensure all coaches are aligned.

#### 3. Drills & Conditioning:

- Rotate groups through strength and conditioning exercises tailored to their skill level. Examples include:
  - Core exercises for beginners (e.g., plank holds, hollow body rocks).

- Power drills for advanced athletes (e.g., explosive jumps, resistance band exercises).
- Incorporate stations or circuits to keep the session engaging.

#### 4. **Cool-down & Stretching:**

- Use static stretches to promote flexibility and recovery.
- Gather all groups together for a unified cool-down session.
- End with a quick reflection or highlight key achievements of the class. For example, "Great work on those vault approaches today!"

#### **Tips for Implementation:**

- **Pre-Session Planning:**

- Create a rotation plan before the session begins. Share it with your coaching team during a quick pre-class meeting.
- Use colour-coded group assignments for easier organisation (e.g., Group 1 = Red, Group 2 = Blue).

- **Coach Assignments:**

- Assign each coach or assistant to a specific group or station to provide consistent guidance.
- Ensure coaches are briefed on the goals and progressions for each station.

- **Timers and Signals:**

- Use a timer or a bell to signal station changes. This keeps the session on track and minimises over-running.

By implementing a structured rotation plan, you can ensure that all groups and levels receive balanced instruction, maximising the use of your gym space and coaching resources.

## **3. Grouping & Differentiation**

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Managing groups effectively ensures every gymnast gets the appropriate level of challenge and support. Implement the following strategies:

### **Group by Ability:**

- **Skill Assessments:** Conduct assessments at the start of each term or training cycle to gauge each gymnast's ability level. Use observation during warm-ups or structured drills to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Flexible Grouping:** Form groups based on skill level, but remain flexible throughout the term to allow gymnasts to move groups as they progress. For example, a gymnast mastering basic handstands might transition into a group focusing on advanced handstand variations.
- **Age and Maturity Considerations:** Take into account the age and emotional maturity of athletes when grouping. Younger athletes may need more frequent breaks and simpler instructions, while older gymnasts may thrive in more advanced, fast-paced environments.

### **Clear Expectations for Each Group:**

- Assign specific goals or skill focuses for each group and individual.
- Ensure all coaches and assistants are aware of these goals to maintain consistency across groups.

### **Peer Learning Opportunities:**

- Encourage collaboration by pairing gymnasts within groups for peer feedback. For example, an advanced gymnast might demonstrate a skill for their peers, or two gymnasts might work together on partner conditioning drills.
- Use group challenges, such as completing a set number of perfect landings, to promote teamwork.

### **Tools for Organising Groups:**

- **Visual Tools:** Use color-coded wristbands, cones, or group tags to differentiate groups. For example, "Red Group" for beginners, "Blue Group" for intermediate, etc.
- **Communication Boards:** Display group assignments and daily goals on a whiteboard at the start of the session.
- **Group Tracking Sheets:** Maintain progress tracking sheets for each group, noting individual achievements and areas for improvement. Share these sheets with the coaching team to ensure continuity in instruction.

### **Individualisation Within Groups:**

- **Skill Variations:** Provide modified versions of drills to suit each gymnast's abilities. For example:
  - Advanced: Perform a full handstand with controlled hold.
  - Intermediate: Practice kick-ups to develop alignment and balance.
  - Beginner: Work on bunny hops to build strength and coordination.
- **Challenge Levels:** Include optional challenges for gymnasts ready to push themselves further. For example, while working on a basic cartwheel, advanced gymnasts could be tasked with adding a rebound into a lunge.



## Safety and Supervision:

- Ensure each group has adequate supervision. Coaches should rotate between groups to provide corrections, spot gymnasts when necessary, and ensure proper technique.
- Limit group sizes to ensure every gymnast receives attention and feedback.

By grouping gymnasts effectively and tailoring activities to their skill levels, you create an environment where every athlete feels challenged, supported, and motivated to progress.

## 4. Setting Clear Goals

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Goal-setting provides athletes with motivation and direction. Incorporate the following techniques:

- **Session Goals:**
  - At the start of each class, outline the day's focus (e.g., mastering forward rolls, improving vault approach).
  - Use whiteboards or posters to display session goals clearly.
- **Short-Term Goals:**
  - Break down complex skills into smaller steps and assign weekly targets (e.g., "Hold a handstand for 3 seconds").
  - Celebrate small victories to boost confidence and morale.
- **Long-Term Goals:**
  - Work with athletes to set termly or annual goals, such as learning a specific routine or competing in a club event.
  - Create goal-tracking sheets for each athlete to monitor progress and adjust as needed.

## 5.Active Coaching Techniques

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Engaging athletes during training fosters focus and skill development. Apply these strategies:

- **Positive Reinforcement:**
  - Highlight effort and improvement with phrases like, “Great focus on your arms in that handstand!”
  - Use stickers, certificates, or a “Gymnast of the Week” award to recognise achievements.
- **Demonstrations:**
  - Always demonstrate skills before asking athletes to attempt them.
  - Use senior gymnasts or videos to provide additional visual examples where possible.
- **Hands-On Feedback:**
  - Offer individualised guidance and corrections to each athlete. Use spotting techniques where appropriate to help gymnasts feel safe while trying new skills.
  - Rotate around the class to ensure all athletes receive attention

## 6.Maintaining Discipline & Focus

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A positive and respectful environment supports learning and enjoyment. Use the following methods:

### **Classroom Signals:**

- Use consistent signals to get attention quickly and efficiently.
- Establish clear rules for responding to signals, such as freezing in place or gathering in a specific area when a signal is given.

### **Behavior Management:**

- **Reward Systems:**
  - Introduce a reward system for good behavior, such as “star points” or stickers for focus, effort, or helping others.
  - Create a “Gymnast of the Day” recognition to motivate positive behavior.
- **Calm Intervention:**
  - Address disruptions calmly and privately to avoid embarrassing the athlete.
  - Use timeouts sparingly and always explain the reason to the athlete in an age-appropriate manner.
- **Behavior Contracts:**
  - For recurring issues, create a behavior contract outlining expected behavior and consequences. Involve parents and the athlete in setting these expectations.

### **Handling Disruptive Behaviour:**

- **Prevention:**
  - Keep gymnasts engaged with minimal downtime to reduce opportunities for distractions.
  - Assign specific roles or tasks to athletes who may lose focus, such as assisting with equipment setup.
- **De-escalation:**
  - If a gymnast becomes disruptive, use a calm and neutral tone to address the behavior. For example, say, “I need you to focus so we can keep everyone safe.”
  - Redirect energy by assigning a productive task, such as practicing a basic skill or stretching.

- **Consistent Consequences:**

- Ensure consequences for disruptive behavior are fair, consistent, and clearly communicated. For example, repeated disruptions might lead to a discussion with parents or missing part of an activity.

**Engagement Techniques:**

- Keep transitions short to keep the class active.
- Vary drills and activities to maintain interest.
- Use fun games as warm-ups or cool-downs to keep gymnasts engaged and motivated.
- Frequently provide positive reinforcement and specific praise for effort and focus.

## 7.Safety Protocols

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Safety is the foundation of a successful gymnastics program. By implementing strict safety protocols, you can reduce the risk of injuries and ensure a positive experience for everyone involved.

**Gym Setup and Equipment Checks:**

- Inspect all equipment daily for wear and tear. Ensure mats are properly placed and secure.
- Maintain clear pathways between apparatus to avoid accidents during transitions.
- Ensure equipment is adjusted to suit the size and skill level of the gymnasts (e.g., lower beams for younger athletes).

**Supervision and Spotting:**

- Ensure a sufficient coach-to-athlete ratio for close supervision, particularly during high-risk activities.
- Use proper spotting techniques to support gymnasts as they learn new skills, reducing the chance of falls or injuries.

- Assign assistants or senior gymnasts to monitor lower-risk stations while coaches focus on higher-risk activities.

### **Warm-Up and Cool-Down:**

- Prioritise proper warm-up routines to prepare the body for physical activity and reduce the risk of muscle strains.
- Incorporate a thorough cool-down with stretching to aid recovery and maintain flexibility.

### **Emergency Procedures:**

- Have a clear emergency action plan (EAP) in place. Ensure all coaches and assistants are trained in its execution.
- Keep a first aid kit readily available and ensure all staff are trained in basic first aid and CPR.
- Display emergency contact numbers and procedures clearly in the gym.

### **Educating Gymnasts:**

- Teach gymnasts proper techniques for landing, falling, and other fundamental safety skills.
- Regularly remind athletes of gym rules, such as waiting their turn and being mindful of others.
- Foster a culture where gymnasts feel comfortable reporting unsafe equipment or behavior.

### **Preventing Overtraining:**

- Monitor gymnasts for signs of fatigue or burnout, such as lack of focus or persistent soreness.
- Schedule adequate rest periods and avoid overloading athletes with repetitive high-impact activities.

### **Parental Involvement:**

- Inform parents about safety protocols and encourage them to raise any concerns they observe.
- Provide clear guidelines on appropriate attire and footwear to minimise risks during training.

By prioritising safety at every level, you create an environment where athletes can confidently explore their potential without unnecessary risk.

## **8. Parent & Athlete Communication**

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Strong communication with parents builds trust and fosters a supportive community around your gymnastics program. Use these strategies to keep parents informed and engaged:

### **Regular Updates:**

- Send weekly or bi-weekly email updates with class schedules, upcoming events, and reminders.
- Share progress updates, highlighting the skills their child is working on and their achievements.

### **Clear Expectations:**

- Provide parents with a handbook or welcome packet outlining class expectations, dress codes, and safety protocols.
- Explain how progress is tracked and how parents can support their child's development at home (e.g., stretches, basic conditioning).

### **Parent Meetings:**

- Schedule regular parent meetings to discuss the program, answer questions, and gather feedback.
- Use these opportunities to explain the rationale behind class structures, rotations, and group placements.

### **Open Door Policy:**

- Encourage parents to approach coaches with concerns or questions. Ensure there's a clear and respectful process for these discussions.
- Be available during specific times before or after classes to address individual needs.

### **Showcasing Achievements:**

- Host parent observation days or showcase events to allow parents to see their child's progress and celebrate their hard work.

- Use social media or newsletters to share photos, videos, or stories of gymnasts' accomplishments (with parental consent).

### **Resolving Concerns:**

- Listen actively and empathetically to parents' concerns. Acknowledge their perspective and work collaboratively toward a solution.
- Keep communication professional and constructive, ensuring both the parent and the coach feel heard and respected.

### **Building a Positive Community:**

- Encourage parent involvement through volunteer opportunities, such as helping at events or assisting with administrative tasks.
- Foster a sense of community by organizing social events, such as picnics or team-building activities, where parents and gymnasts can connect.

By maintaining transparent and proactive communication, you create a strong foundation of trust and collaboration that benefits both the gymnasts and the program as a whole.

## **9. Adaptability & Coach Growth**



Adaptability is a vital trait for any coach, as it ensures you can adjust to the ever-changing dynamics of a class or group of athletes. Being flexible allows you to better manage challenges that arise and ensures athletes receive the most beneficial learning experience possible.

### **Adjust Plans as Needed**

No plan is foolproof, and things don't always go as expected. If a particular drill or exercise isn't working for the group, be ready to pivot. If the athletes are struggling with a specific skill or showing signs of frustration, it's a good idea to tweak the approach, whether it's simplifying the task, offering more individual feedback, or changing the drill entirely. This approach demonstrates that learning is



not a rigid process—it's fluid and adaptable to the needs of the athlete. This flexibility also helps maintain the flow of the session, ensuring that athletes remain engaged and productive.

### **Adapt to Energy Levels**

Energy levels play a critical role in group dynamics. If you notice that athletes are fatigued, distracted, or losing focus, it may be time to change gears. A high-energy skill-building drill might need to be replaced with a less intense but still valuable exercise. Alternatively, a quick interactive break, where athletes can hydrate, engage in light conversation, or stretch together, can help recharge the group's energy. Tailoring the pace of your session to the group's physical and mental state can improve the effectiveness of training and ensure a positive atmosphere. Recognizing when to push and when to ease up is key to keeping athletes both challenged and engaged.

## **9. Professional Development for Coaches**

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As a coach, your growth is just as important as your athletes'. Investing in your professional development allows you to stay sharp, deepen your knowledge, and enhance your ability to manage and inspire your athletes.

### **Ongoing Education**

Gymnastics is a continuously evolving sport, with new techniques, equipment, and methods emerging regularly. Staying current with the latest trends ensures you're equipped with the best tools to teach your athletes. This can be achieved by attending workshops, enrolling in seminars, or pursuing relevant certifications. These opportunities not only expand your technical knowledge but also expose you to a variety of teaching styles and coaching strategies that you can adapt to fit your unique coaching philosophy. Whether it's learning new drills, understanding the biomechanics of a move, or staying on top of injury prevention techniques, continuous learning ensures that you remain an effective and respected coach.

## **Collaborate with Fellow Coaches**

Being part of a community of coaches is invaluable for both personal and professional growth. Working alongside other coaches within your gym or through external networks offers an opportunity to exchange ideas and refine your own methods. Collaborative environments encourage brainstorming and creative problem-solving, allowing coaches to learn from each other's experiences. For example, if you're struggling with how to effectively manage a large group of athletes, discussing it with other coaches can provide new strategies or insights you may not have considered. Sharing successes, challenges, and tips not only enhances your skill set but also fosters a sense of teamwork and mutual support within the coaching community.

## **10. Conclusion**

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In conclusion, effectively managing groups and classes in a gymnastics setting requires a combination of clear communication, organisation, adaptability, and ongoing personal development. Coaches must prioritise establishing strong, positive relationships with their athletes while maintaining structure through well-organised plans and flexible approaches. By adjusting drills to suit the needs of the athletes and being mindful of energy levels, coaches can ensure that sessions remain engaging and productive. Additionally, investing in professional development—through continuous learning and collaboration with fellow coaches—helps maintain a high standard of coaching and ensures that the latest techniques and best practices are incorporated into the training environment.

Clubs also play a pivotal role in supporting coaches with the necessary resources, creating a culture of growth, and providing an environment that fosters teamwork and innovation. With strong communication, the ability to adapt, and a focus on professional growth, both coaches and clubs can create dynamic, effective learning experiences for athletes, setting them up for success in both gymnastics and in life.