

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS

GENERAL RULES

Due to length of the Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules, SOWI cannot reprint the rules in this Competition Guide. Please refer to the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules on the Special Olympics, Inc. website at www.specialolympics.org. These can also be accessed through the SOWI website under Sports / Sports Offered / Gymnastics. Coaches are responsible for reviewing SOWI and Special Olympics, Inc. rules.

OFFICIAL EVENTS OFFERED:

Gymnastics competition is not offered at the district level. All athletes are automatically eligible to advance to the Summer Games. If the number of participants changes in the future, a determination will be made regarding how the competitions are offered.

1. Level A (performed seated) or B (performed standing) – Individual Compulsory Routines, Co-ed
 - a. Rope
 - b. Hoop
 - c. Ball
 - d. Ribbon
 - e. All Around (combination of all scores, a-d)
2. Level I – Individual Compulsory routines, Length: 30 Seconds, Female Only
 - a. Rope
 - b. Hoop
 - c. Ball
 - d. Ribbon
 - e. All Around (combination of all scores, a-d)
3. Level II – Individual Compulsory Routines, Length: 60 Seconds, Female Only
 - a. Clubs
 - b. Hoop
 - c. Ball
 - d. Ribbon
 - e. All Around (combination of all scores, a-d)
4. Level III – Individual Compulsory Routines, Length: 60-80 Seconds, Female Only
 - a. Clubs
 - b. Rope
 - c. Ball
 - d. Ribbon
 - e. All Around (combination of all scores, a-d)
5. For All Around, awards will be given for each individual event and for All Around. If an athlete does not do one event, they are no longer considered All Around and are judged for the individual event(s).

SECTION A – RULES OF COMPETITION

1. Athletes must compete within the same level (A, B, I, II, III) in all chosen events.
 - a. Level A has been written for athletes who are unable to stand on their own. They may sit in a wheelchair or a sturdy chair to compete. Level B athletes must stand.
 - b. The order of events in rhythmic gymnastics is as follows: rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon.
2. Music for rhythmic gymnastics: All music and routines can be downloaded on the Special Olympics, Inc. website at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/gymnastics/rhythmic-gymnastics>.
3. For All Around, awards will be given for each individual event and for All Around. If an athlete does not do one event, they are no longer considered All Around and are judged for the individual event(s).

SECTION B – ATTIRE

1. Female Gymnasts should wear a leotard or unitard of any color. Long tights down to the ankle may be worn. Skirted leotards with the skirt no longer than the upper thigh are acceptable.
 - a. Leotards may be with or without sleeves but dance leotards with narrow straps are not allowed.
 - 1) The cut of the leotard at the top of the legs must not go beyond the fold of the crotch (maximum).
 - 2) Any decoration added to the leotard, either loose or stuck to the garment (flowers, ribbons, etc.) must adhere to the leotard.
 - 3) Leotards must be non-transparent material. Lace or other sheer fabric should be lined and non-transparent.
 - 4) Bare feet, gymnastics slippers or rhythmic half-slippers (recommended) are acceptable.
 - 5) Hairstyles should be neat.
 - 6) No jewelry is allowed.
2. Male gymnasts shall wear tank tops (leotards), t-shirts, and long gymnastics pants or gymnastics shorts. Gymnasts may compete in white socks, gymnastics slippers or bare feet.

SECTION C - APPARATUS

1. Local Programs are responsible for bringing their own apparatus for each event at all levels of competition. **Apparatuses will not be provided.**
2. The size of the apparatus can range from child size to senior equipment, based on the gymnast's size and skill level. Equipment should be color coordinated with the athlete's leotard. Equipment will be checked prior to competition, as well as during competition, as the gymnast leaves the floor after each routine. If the apparatus does not meet specifications, a deduction of 0.5 will be taken from the score on that event.
 - a. Rope specifications
 - 1) Material: The rope may be of hemp or synthetic material, provided that it possesses the identical qualities of lightness and suppleness as rope made of hemp.
 - 2) Length: The length should be proportionate to the size of the gymnast.

- 3) Ends: Handles of any kind are not allowed, but one or two knots are permitted at each end. At the ends (to the exclusion of all other parts of the rope), a maximum of 10 centimeters may be covered by an anti-slip material, either colored or neutral.
 - 4) Shape: The rope may be either of a uniform diameter or be progressively thicker in the center, provided that this thickness is of the same material as the rope.
 - 5) Color: The rope may be any color or combinations of colors.
- b. Hoop specifications
- 1) Material: The hoop may be of wood or plastic, provided that the latter retains its shape during movement. Foreign particles should be removed from inside the hoop before use.
 - 2) Diameter: The interior diameter of the hoop should be from 60-90 centimeters.
 - 3) Weight: A minimum of 150-300 grams and up.
 - 4) Shape: The cross-section of the hoop may be in several different shapes: circular, square, rectangular, oval, etc. The hoop may be smooth or ridged.
 - 5) Color: The hoop may be any color or combination of colors. The hoop may be partially or fully covered with tape to add colors.
- c. Ball specifications
- 1) Material: The ball may be made of rubber or synthetic material (pliable plastic), provided that the latter possesses the same elasticity as rubber.
 - 2) Diameter: 14-20 centimeters.
 - 3) Color: The ball may be of any color.
- d. Clubs specifications
- 1) Material: the clubs may be made of wood or synthetic material.
 - 2) Length: 25-50 centimeters from one end to the other.
 - 3) Shape: A shape similar to that of a bottle. The wider part is called the body. The narrow part, the neck, ends in a small sphere, the head.
 - 4) Color: The clubs may be of a neutral color or may be colored (all or partially) with one or several colors.
- e. Ribbon specifications
- 1) Stick
 - a) Material: wood, bamboo, plastic, fiberglass.
 - b) Diameter: a maximum of 1 centimeter at its widest part.
 - c) Shape: cylindrical or conical, or a combination of the two shapes.
 - d) Length: 45-60 centimeters, including the ring, which permits the fastening of the ribbon to the stick. The bottom end of the stick may be covered by an adhesive, anti-slip tape or may have a rubber handle a maximum length of 10 centimeters at the level of the grip. The top of the stick where the ribbon will be attached may consist of:

- i. A supple strap (string or nylon) held in place by a nylon thread wound around the stick for a maximum of 5 centimeters.
- ii. A metal ring fixed directly onto the stick.
- iii. A metal ring (vertical, horizontal or oblique) fixed to the stick by two metal pins held in place by nylon or metallic thread wound around the stick for a maximum of 5 centimeters.
- iv. A metal ring (fixed, mobile or pivoting) or a supple strap fixed to a metal tip of no more than 3 centimeters.
- v. A metal ring fixed by two metal pins held by a metal tip of 3 centimeters long, which is lengthened by nylon or metallic thread wound around the stick, adding up to a maximum length of 5 centimeters.
- vi. Color: any choice.

2) Ribbon

- a) Material: satin or similar non-starched material.
- b) Color: any choice of a single color, two colors or multicolored.
- c) Width: 4-6 centimeters.
- d) Length: From one end to the other, the finished length of the ribbon should be a minimum of 2 meters to a maximum of 6 meters (for Levels A, B) and a minimum of 3 meters to a maximum of 6 meters (for Levels 1-4). This part must be in one piece.
 - i. The end which is attached to the stick is doubled for a maximum length of 1 meter. This is stitched down both sides. At the top, a very thin reinforcement or rows of machine stitching for a maximum of 5 centimeters is authorized.
 - ii. This extremity may end in a strap, or have an eyelet (a small hole, edged with buttonhole stitch or metal circle), to permit attaching the ribbon.

3) Attachment of the ribbon to the stick

- a) The ribbon is fixed to the stick by means of a supple attachment, such as thread, nylon cord, or a series of articulated rings.
- b) The length of this attachment is a maximum of 7 centimeters (not counting the strap or metal ring at the end of the stick where it will be fastened).

3. Floor specifications

- 1) 12 meters by 12 meters with a security zone of 1 meter around. A carpeted area may be used or a floor that is neither too tacky nor slippery. The ceiling height does not need to be 8 meters (26' 3"), but should be fairly high.

SECTION D – SKILL DESCRIPTIONS (See Special Olympics, Inc. Rules)

Safety Considerations

Consistent with the Special Olympics philosophy that the movement is athlete- centered, the safety of athletes is the primary concern when establishing sports rules. The establishment of international guidelines for Special Olympics gymnastics compulsory and optional routines will ensure that the athletes follow a proper progression of instruction in gymnastics skills. This will reduce the incidence of injuries. Athletes who safely perform all skills in a specific level of compulsory routines should compete at that level. Competition in optional routines has been limited to advanced-level gymnasts only.

Learning the proper progressions of skill instruction and correct spotting techniques is the responsibility of the gymnastics coach. Special Olympics commends those national/state Programs in which certified gymnastics instructors use the proper progression for teaching advanced gymnastics skills which is set forth in the Gymnastic Coaching Guide, these rules and elsewhere.

Many volunteers begin coaching with limited gymnastics expertise. These volunteers should start by teaching only the basic skills and routines. Those skills that are included in the more advanced levels should be taught by coaches with at least two years of mainstream artistic gymnastics coaching experience. It is recommended that coaches of advanced Levels 3 and 4 gymnasts have additional training in gymnastics from the National Governing Body for gymnastics in their country.

Regardless of how much safety is provided, coaches should not entice or encourage their athletes to perform skills that are beyond their reasonable ability or skills that are beyond the coaches' ability to teach. Special Olympics recommends that all gymnastics coaches become safety certified in accordance with the policy endorsed by the appropriate National Governing Body. Special Olympics concurs with the following responsibility statement:

“Even though gymnastics safety is everyone’s responsibility, the instructor or coach must bear much of it, including the responsibility to see that others do their share: the parents, the doctor and the athletes. Prevention and remediation are major responsibilities in a broad umbrella-type program under which many other points must be included: the environment, the prescribed learning progression and the physical preparedness of the athlete. These are the areas where the instructor/coach bears much of the moral and legal responsibility. It is not enough to warn and inform; all concerned must have an appreciation and understanding of the risk in every vigorous gymnastics activity.”

As shown on the video and written in the text, coaches must be in a position to spot on vault, uneven bars, and high beam before an athlete may compete in these events. The coach must remain in the remain there during the routine. The gymnast will be stopped and will receive deductions if the coach is not in the spotting position for the routine. Refer to the Judges Guide.