

Gymnastics (Bars, Rings, Beam, Floor, Vaults)

Balance Beam, Floor, High Bar, Parallel Bars, Pommel Horse, Still Rings, Table Or Flatback Vaulting, Uneven Parallel Bars

ELEMENTARY - INTERSCHOOL 2025

- This activity includes additional safety standards specific to Qualifications and First Aid (previously designated High Risk).
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- Protective equipment must not be altered (for example, cutting a portion off the back of mouth guards, adding padding to a protective helmet).
- Equipment must be inspected on a regular basis and repaired as necessary.
- Vaulting boards that are higher than 20cm at the take-off end are not allowed. Only vaulting boards to be used for take-offs. Vaulting boards used to mount the apparatus must be removed immediately

after use.

- Box horses must not be used for vaulting.
- Coach must do a safety check for proper set-up prior to student use. Determine all locking mechanisms are checked prior to use.
- Balance beams for competition must be padded and stable.
- General utility mats to be used:
 - cross-link foam 5cm (2")
 - open-cell foam 5cm (2")
 - polyurethane 5cm (2")
 - dual-density 5cm (2")
 - mats of equivalent compaction rating as determined by manufacturer
 - 30cm – 60cm (12"–24")-thick mats must not be used as a landing surface for landing on feet off any piece of equipment.
- Hardside softside landing mats a minimum of 12cm (5") must be in place for each apparatus.
- For handspring flatback vaulting to stacked mats and on the vaulting table, the mats must be roped together to a minimum height of 105cm (42") and a maximum of 125cm (50") (using 5cm [2"] increments). The top mat must be hard side up.
- Mats joined together must be of uniform thickness and composition (for example, all carpet or all vinyl).

- For skill acquisition, equipment must be adapted to the size and ability of the student.
- Proper hand grips and chalk must be available.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate footwear must be worn. Bare feet, running shoes or gymnastic slippers permitted. No sock feet permitted.
- Appropriate clothing must be worn (for example, suitable gym clothing) so that students can move unrestricted on mats.
- Secure or remove eyeglasses.
- The wearing of jewellery during practices and competitions must meet the rules of the governing body of the sport/activity, [OFSAA](#), and local athletic association. Consult the [General Safety Standards for Clothing, Footwear, and Jewellery](#) when jewellery is not addressed by the governing body of the sport/activity, OFSAA or the local athletic association.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the coach.

- Activity surface and surrounding area must be free of all obstacles (for example, tables, chairs), and must provide safe footing and traction.
- Mats must be situated around/under apparatus as a landing area.
- Precautions must be taken to minimize the movement of mats on impact.
- Velcro mats must be attached.
- Minimum distance between equipment must be 1.5m (5') beyond mats. Minimum distance from wall must be 1.5m (5') if padded with vaulting.
- Additional matting must be placed beyond the corners of the competitive floor area extending out 10cm (4") around the corner of either side.
- Walls, stages, equipment, trees, and posts must not be used as turning points, finish lines, end zones, or boundaries. Establish a clearly delineated boundary line away from the hazards, using visual markers (for example, lines, pylons), to prevent contact/collision.
- Consult **General Safety Standards for Facilities** for the opening and closing of gymnasium divider doors/curtains.
- When walking, running, or wheeling takes place off school site for a warm-up, conditioning and/or is an integral part of the activity:
 - Coaches must do a safety check in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
 - Coaches must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the activity.
 - Coaches must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Prior to participation students must receive concussion information through the appropriate Ministry of Education's Concussion Awareness Resource or the school board approved concussion resources. Students must also receive information on:
 - the Concussion Code of Conduct;
 - concussion prevention strategies specific to the activity and inherent risks of the activity (that is, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks);
 - procedures and rules for safe play; and
 - the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Students must confirm their review of the concussion awareness resource and Concussion Code of Conduct prior to participation.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Students must not be encouraged to perform skills beyond their physical and psychological capabilities.

- Utilize a safe and sequential skill development program that includes a conditioning component for flexibility and strength.
- Students must be instructed on safety related to gymnastics and all associated apparatus prior to using any equipment.
- Students must be instructed in the safe and correct way of moving and handling the parallel bars/uneven parallel bars/balance beam/vault table (e.g., lifting, setting up/taking down/adjusting).
- Students must be trained to spot each other appropriately.
- Only Coaches shall spot inverted vault and aerial moves.
- Emphasize controlled movement when requiring students to walk or run backwards. Backward-running races are not permitted.
- When involved in practice drills, students must not be required to close their eyes or be blindfolded.
- Fair play and rules of the sport must be taught and strictly enforced.
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Students must be informed that they are not to share water bottles.
- Parents/guardians must be informed of the school board's policy related to initiation/hazing activities.
- The presence and location of spectators must not present a safety concern. A school is responsible for supervising its own spectators. The ratio of supervisor to spectators must address safety concerns.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- On-Site Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- Direct Supervision is required for the initial skill acquisition on apparatus (e.g., aerial rotations, inverted skills, skills on apparatus that are above spotters' shoulders).
- Direct Supervision is required for all elevated inversions (e.g., handspring flatback vaults to stacked mats, handspring flatback vaults to vaulting table with stacked mats behind it).
- On-Site Supervision is required after students' demonstration of proficiency of skills on apparatus (e.g., aerial rotations, inverted skills, skills on apparatus that are above spotters' shoulders).
- Direct Supervision is required when trained students are moving and handling equipment (e.g., lifting, setting up/taking down/adjusting).
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Coach, can monitor students during practices and competitions. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Coaches and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.

Qualifications

- Game/match official(s) must be certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport.
- The Head Coach must demonstrate knowledge of the sport, skills, and strategies to the Principal or Designate.
- All Coaches must be familiar with and implement, where applicable, the criteria outlined in [Coaches Expectations](#).
- At least one gymnastics Coach must possess one of the following coaching qualifications:
 - NCCP Community Sport Coach – Gymnastics Foundations course
 - Completion of gymnastics NCCP level 1 and/or level 2 certification in the past
 - Accreditation as a NCCP Gymnastics Learning Facilitator
 - Attendance at a clinic or workshop within the last three years provided by an instructor who is knowledgeable of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions), and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.
 - Past experience within the last 3 years as a coach in gymnastics, having knowledge of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and current safety practices as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.
- For more information on sport-specific NCCP training please visit coach.ca.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- The designated individual who takes responsibility for providing first aid to injured students must:☒☒

- as a minimum, have a current first aid certification from a recognized first aid provider (for example, St. John Ambulance, Red Cross) that includes CPR B or C and training in head, neck and spinal injury management;☒☒
- be in the area and readily accessible during the entire practice/competition;☒☒
- be aware of the school's first aid emergency action plan and follow their first aid emergency response (consult First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response) including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, and use of assistive devices or medications;☒☒
- follow their school board's concussion protocol for a suspected concussion;
- and not be a participant in the activity.☒

Definitions

- **Coach** (i.e. Teacher Coach/Community Coach):
 - An individual who volunteers to coach a school team and is approved by the Principal/Designate.
- **Community Coach:**
 - An individual approved by the principal who volunteers to coach a school team. An individual acting in the role of a Community Coach must be assigned a Community Coach Liaison.
 - Examples of a Community Coach are:
 - teachers not under contract by the board;
 - retired teachers;
 - early childhood educators, teacher candidates, educational assistants;
 - co-op students, other secondary students;
 - parent/guardian;

- individuals/coaches from the community.

- **Community Coach Liaison:**

- A Teacher, Principal, or Vice Principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school board who is responsible for carrying out all the duties required of a Teacher pursuant to the Education Act and the safety standards. The level of support will be commensurate with the expertise and qualifications of the Community Coach and will be determined by the Principal or Designate.

- **Monitor:**

- A Volunteer and/or Qualified Instructor who assists the Teacher Coach with a group of students and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.
- A Community Coach who has a responsibility to coach and monitor student behaviors for the duration of the athletic season and/or a Qualified Instructor(s)/Volunteer(s) who assists the Community Coach during practices and competitions.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the Coach for management and direction.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher Coach:**

- A Teacher Coach is a teacher, principal, or vice principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school board.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Coach is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both the activity and student safety.
- Provisos:
 - No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Coach supervising.

- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
 - Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.
- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the set up and take down of equipment;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
 - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.
- **In-the-Area Supervision:**
 - The Coach is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - **Provisos:**
 - The Coach is circulating between the activities, occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the coach is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and is monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
 - An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:

- Where the same activity is located in separate locations. (e.g., Track and Field, Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine));
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a different location from the Coach (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling);
 - Where activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

- **On-Site Supervision:**
 - The Coach is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, tennis courts at an Outside Activity Provider's facility) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Coach is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outside storage shed, boathouse) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.
 - An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;

- With activities using multiple stations while the Coach is circulating;
- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Coach is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Coach and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.

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