

# Gymnastics (Mat Work)

## Body Movement Patterns While Using Equipment.

### ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- 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

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- 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.
- Regularly check mats for wear and tears.
- Mats with velcro must be attached together when multiple mats are used to make a larger mat surface.
- General utility mats (5cm/2") are to be used for floor work and tumbling and landing on feet from a low controlled height. When general utility mats (5cm/2") are used, a student must not jump from a height higher than their own chest height.
- General utility mats (5cm/2") must be:

- situated around/under apparatus such that mats must not overlap or have open spaces.
- composed of the following types of shock absorbing foams:
  - closed cell/cross-linked polyethylene foam 5cm (2")
  - open cell polyurethane foam (100 Indentation Force Deflection (I.F.D.) minimum) 5cm (2")
  - dual density foam 5cm (2")
  - mats of equivalent compaction rating as determined by manufacturer

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

## Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

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- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn.
- Bare feet, running shoes or gymnastic slippers must be worn.
- No sock feet are permitted.
- No jewellery is permitted.
- Tie back long hair and remove hair clips.
- Secure or remove eyeglasses.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

## Facilities

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- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Playing surface and surrounding area must be free of all obstacles and must provide safe footing and traction.
- Floor plan must allow enough space from walls and from pieces of apparatus for safe movement.
- Allow for movement landings at safe distances away from walls and other equipment.
- 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:
  - Teachers must do a safety check in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
  - Teachers must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the activity.
  - Teachers must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

## Special Rules/Instructions

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- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [\*\*Medical Conditions\*\*](#).

- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- 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.
- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- 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.
- While moving, students must not be required to close their eyes or be blind-folded.
- Emphasize controlled movement when requiring students to walk or run backwards. Backward-running races are not permitted.
- Students must be instructed not to attempt:
  - aerial somersaults
  - extended dive rolls (for example, dive rolls for distance, diving over bodies)
  - front handsprings
  - back handsprings
  - back head rolls

- headstands
- Mat work must precede apparatus.
- Observe that students demonstrate control of basic movement before moving to higher level skills (for example, rotations on mats before performing on apparatus, and perform landings before working on elevated equipment).
- Inversions permitted following Teacher instruction, and after student has demonstrated skill progressions.
- Mats must be placed on floor soft-side up.
- When mats are placed end-to-end, they must be securely fastened on Velcro strips.
- When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the Teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the Teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- 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 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.

## Spotting

- Spotting is initially the role of the Teacher, and then may progress to students who have been trained by the Teacher.
- Responsibilities vary with the age, strength and experience of the student.
- Grades 1-3: students are involved in non-contact spotting only (for example, keeping approach and landing areas clear).
- Grades 4-6: students are involved in non-contact spotting as above, as well as giving verbal cues and checking placement of mats and stability of equipment. Students can also help peers maintain a non-inverted static balance on benches/ boxes/mats.
- Grades 7-8: students can do all of the spotting that students in grades 1 to 6 can do, plus help peers maintain balance on mats and simple vaults on hip-high horses.

## Supervision

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- 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.
- On-Site 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).
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.

- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, 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 Teacher who is providing instruction and is unfamiliar with the activity (for example, no recent experience) must refrain from teaching the activity until assistance is provided by an appropriately trained staff or training is received.

## First Aid

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- 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.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#))).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☒

## Definitions

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- **In-charge Person:**
  - Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **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 teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **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:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher 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 Teacher 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 Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- 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 Teacher 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 Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
    - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
    - 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., Fitness activities);
    - 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 separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
  - When the 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 Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) 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 Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
      - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
      - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
    - 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 Teacher is circulating;

- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher 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 Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

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