



Special Olympics

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS COACHING GUIDE

Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



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Teaching Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules

The best time to teach the rules of rhythmic gymnastics is during practice. For example, athletes must learn the routines they will perform in competition. Please refer to *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* for the complete listing of rhythmic gymnastics rules.

Rules for Sport Competition

- ♦ FIG (Fédération Internationale Gymnastique) regulations govern competitions, except when they are in conflict with *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ♦ Special Olympics order of events is: rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon.

Levels of Competition

- ♦ The current rhythmic gymnastics rules and routines can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ♦ For each level, there are four routines.
- ♦ Athletes who perform all four routines in the same level are considered All-Around. The All-Around score is the sum of the scores from each of the four routines. Athletes may receive an award for their placement in the All-Around.
- ♦ Level A
 - Routines for athletes who compete seated.
 - Male and female athletes may participate.
- ♦ Level B
 - Routines for lower level athletes who are mobile.
 - Male and female athletes may participate.
- ♦ Level 1-3
 - Compulsory routines – The music and choreography are prescribed.
 - Female athletes may participate.
- ♦ Level 4
 - Optional routines for the advanced level athlete – The music and choreography are individual for each athlete.
 - Female athletes may participate.
- ♦ Group
 - Compulsory routines for groups of either four or six athletes.
 - Female athletes may participate.

Age Groups

- ♦ Competitors are divisioned into age groups according to the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*: 8-11, 12-15, 16-21, 22-over.
- ♦ Age groups may be combined in divisioning if there are not enough athletes of similar ability within an age group to allow for fair competition.

Apparatus

- ♦ Specifications for the size of the hand apparatus can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. If an athlete needs to use modified equipment due to a disability, the coach must submit (to the competition



management) the Request for Equipment Modification Form, which can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. (Refer to the Training and Competition section for more information.)

- ♦ During competition, one replacement apparatus for each routine may be placed by the competitive floor. A deduction will be taken if the athlete uses the replacement apparatus. (For example, the athlete will receive a deduction if the attachment of the ribbon to the ribbon stick breaks during the routine and she uses the replacement ribbon to complete the routine.)
- ♦ Spectators should be instructed not to touch the apparatus if it goes out of bounds. An additional deduction is taken if the athlete has help retrieving the apparatus.
- ♦ The apparatus should be measured before competition to make sure it meets Special Olympics specifications. The apparatus may be re-measured as the athlete leaves the competition floor at the completion of a routine.

Attire

- ♦ Regulations pertaining to competition attire can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. However, if FIG rules regarding attire should change between *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* updates, athletes may follow the current FIG rules. (Refer to the Training and Competition section for more information.)

Judging

- ♦ Each routine is judged by one judge or a panel of judges, depending on the organization of the competition.
- ♦ Judging forms and guidelines can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ♦ The score awarded by the judges is final. See the section below regarding protest procedures.
- ♦ Line judges should be positioned at opposite corners of the competition floor to record out-of-bounds violations. All other deductions are determined by the acting judge or judges.
- ♦ Most neutral deductions (out of bounds, apparatus, attire, etc.) follow FIG rules. There are some neutral deductions that are unique to Special Olympics. Because many athletes have memory problems and require assistance during the routines, coaches are allowed to stand in designated areas, in view of the judges, to provide help as needed. Deductions will be taken for physical assistance, verbal assistance and gestures.

Compulsory Routines are judged on:

- ♦ Exactness of Text
 - Difficulty (Identified Skills)
 - Connections (All parts of the routine except the Identified Skills)
 - Floor Pattern
 - Music
- ♦ Execution and Amplitude
 - Execution includes form (straight legs, pointed toes, position, extension of the upper body, etc.) and apparatus errors (drops, incorrect handling, static, etc.)
 - Amplitude refers to the general extension of both the body (height of jumps, extension of the legs and upper body, high on toes, etc.) and apparatus (height of tosses, extension in swings, etc.)



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- ◆ Elegance and General Impression
 - Elegance includes graceful, soft, flowing arms, supple body movements and an elegant carriage of the upper body.
 - Good general impression is a performance with few errors. The gymnast must be full of confidence and perform with style and emotion.

Optional Routines are judged on:

- ◆ Technical Value (Body Skills in the routine)
- ◆ Apparatus Technical Movements (four required technical movements for each apparatus)
- ◆ Connections and apparatus technique
- ◆ Musicality
- ◆ Floor pattern and use of space
- ◆ Execution and Amplitude
- ◆ Elegance and General Impression

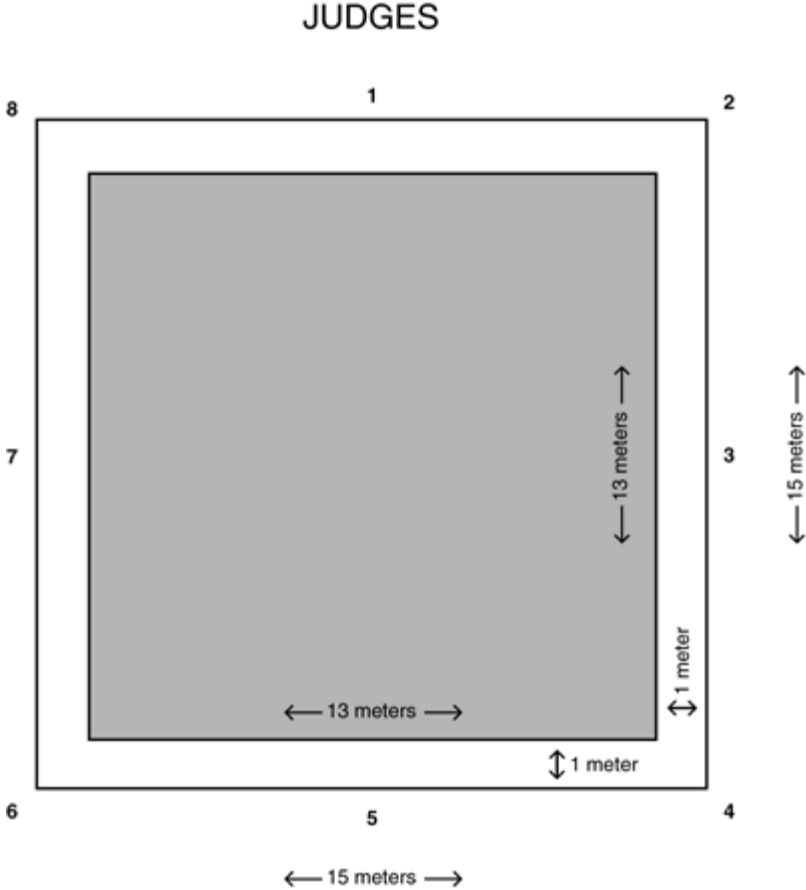
Group Routines are judged on:

- ◆ Difficulty (Identified Skills and Formations)
- ◆ Connections
- ◆ Uniformity of the group
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Execution and Amplitude
- ◆ Elegance and General Impression



Competition Floor

- ♦ The judges will always sit by Side 1 of the competition floor. Athletes should train routines and learn floor patterns accordingly.
- ♦ Traveling clockwise (to the right) around the competition floor: Side 1, Corner 2, Side 3, Corner 4, Side 5, Corner 6, Side 7, Corner 8.





Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must be written, cite a specific violation from the rules, and state why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The coach should check with the competition management team prior to a competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition. The protest period is time sensitive. Coaches should be aware of the impact on their athletes and competition time schedule.

The role of the competition management team or jury is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athletes are competing that you think violated the *Official Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules*. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Filing a protest is a serious matter that may impact a competition.



Rhythmic Gymnastics Protocol & Etiquette

During Practice

Coaches should:

- ♦ Arrive early to make sure the gym is set up appropriately for training (floor area free of clutter, equipment in good repair, music ready)
- ♦ Set a good example for the athletes by dressing in workout attire
- ♦ Have a general plan for the training session, and good knowledge of the skills and teaching progressions to be utilized
- ♦ Maintain discipline and pay attention to safety at all times
- ♦ Be prepared to react appropriately in case of an injury or emergency
- ♦ Interact with all athletes during each practice session
- ♦ Have enough assistant coaches to conduct a well organized training session

Coaches should instruct athletes to:

- ♦ Arrive on time for practice
- ♦ Wear proper attire
- ♦ Be ready to work when practice begins
- ♦ Listen to all instructions
- ♦ Use their own apparatus or the apparatus given to them by the coach
- ♦ Use apparatus safely and for its intended purpose
- ♦ Respect other gymnasts' personal space on the floor
- ♦ Receive the coach's permission when leaving the floor
- ♦ Respect coaches



At Competition

Coaches should:

- ♦ Fill out all entry forms correctly and in a timely manner
- ♦ Tell the athletes the location and the time of the competition
- ♦ Instruct the athletes what to wear for the competition
- ♦ Bring rhythmic apparatus to the competition site or instruct the athletes to bring their personal apparatus
- ♦ Bring music (for routines) to the competition site; for optional routines, instruct the athlete to bring an extra copy of her music
- ♦ Arrive early for competition
- ♦ Check with Competition Management to determine that all athletes are entered correctly
- ♦ Notify Competition Management of any scratches
- ♦ Attend all coaches meetings
- ♦ Be responsible for the athletes under your supervision
- ♦ Make sure the athlete is ready to compete when the official calls for that athlete
- ♦ Provide any necessary assistance to your athletes and remain in the designated coaches area when doing so
- ♦ Be respectful of all competition staff, officials and other participants
- ♦ Be positive and enthusiastic, and promote good sportsmanship

Coaches should instruct athletes to:

- ♦ Arrive on time for competition
- ♦ Wear proper competition attire
- ♦ Bring their personal apparatus if instructed to do so by the coach
- ♦ Bring an extra copy of music for optional routines
- ♦ Display good sportsmanship at all times
- ♦ Respect other gymnasts' personal space on the floor during warm-up
- ♦ Stay in the designated warm-up and competition areas
- ♦ Receive the coach's permission when leaving the area
- ♦ Respect all judges and officials
- ♦ Keep all personal belongings and apparatus in designated area
- ♦ Eat and/or drink only in designated areas

Coaches should instruct parents/guardians and spectators to:

- ♦ Display good sportsmanship at all times
- ♦ Respect all judges and officials
- ♦ Stay in designated spectator areas
- ♦ Not retrieve any apparatus that leaves the floor during the competition
- ♦ Not use flash photography



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches' and athletes' commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Lead by example. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes.

Competitive Effort

- ♦ Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- ♦ Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.

Fair Play at All Times

- ♦ Always comply with the rules.
- ♦ Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- ♦ Respect the decision of the officials/ judges at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

1. Always set a good example for participants and spectators to follow.
2. Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities, and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the top priorities.
3. Respect judgment of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
4. Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
5. Demonstrate a high standard of sportsmanship.

Expectations of Athletes

1. Treat fellow competitors with respect.
2. Encourage competitors when they make a mistake.
3. Respect the judgment of officials and abide by the rules of the competition.
4. Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
5. Define winning as doing your personal best.
6. Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.
7. Have Fun!

Remember

- ♦ Always display good sportsmanship.
- ♦ Have a positive attitude about competition.
- ♦ Reward the attempt, not only the outcome!



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Rhythmic Gymnastics Glossary

Term	Definition
Amplitude	Refers to the extension of both the body (including height of jumps, extension of legs and upper body, high on toes) and apparatus (including height of tosses and extension in swings).
Arabesque	Ballet – One leg is held extended to the front or back.
Arch	Body position – An extended position with the upper body inclined backward, showing an arch in the back.
Assisted roll	Hoop, ball – A roll of the apparatus with guidance from one or both hands throughout the roll.
Attitude (position)	Ballet – One leg is held to the front or back in a bent, turned out position.
Backbend	Body position – The athlete is in an arched position with the hands and feet on the floor and the abdomen raised.
Balance	Body Skill – A movement requiring the athlete to stay immobile in a position. May be either flat footed or in relevé.
Body alignment	Correct posture, with the head, shoulders, ribs and pelvis in alignment. The hips and shoulders should be square.
Body Skills	There are four categories of body skills: Jumps/Leaps, Turns/Pivots, Balances, Flexibilities. Acrobatic skills are sometimes added.
Body wave	A wave-like movement which moves through the entire body. There are front, back and side body waves.
Boomerang roll	Hoop – A free roll with a back spin that rolls away from the athlete and returns.
Bourrée	Ballet – Small steps performed high on the toes.
Cat leap (pas de chat)	Ballet – An aerial transfer of weight from one foot to the other, lifting the knees in a front attitude position (bent and turned out).
Chainé turn	Ballet – A three-step traveling turn performed high on the toes.
Chassé	Ballet – A gallop step in which the feet are closed together in the air. May be done to the front, side or back.
Circumduction	Dance – A 360° circle of the trunk maintaining an even degree of bend. May be done to the right or left.
Compulsory routine	Competition – A routine with prescribed choreography and music.
Contraction	Body position – A forward bend of the trunk with the abdominal muscles pulled in, pelvis tucked under, knees bent and the head down in line with the body.
Core	The center of the body – the abdominal muscles which stabilize the torso and pelvis, allowing the athlete to work with proper body alignment.
Dégagé	Ballet – A brush to point the foot in an open position slightly off the floor. The arches are fully extended. May be done to the front, side or back.



Term	Definition
Developpé	Ballet – A movement in which the working leg is drawn up to the knee of the supporting leg and slowly extended to an open position in the air and held there with perfect control. May be done to the front, side or back.
Execution	Refers to the way a skill is performed, including straight legs, pointed toes, body alignment and good technique on the body and apparatus skills.
Figure 8	Apparatus – Two circular movements in the same plane performed in succession, such as a sagittal circle performed on the right side of the body followed by a sagittal circle on the left.
Flexibility	Body Skill – A movement requiring suppleness of the back, torso and/or legs.
Flip toss	Hoop – A toss around the horizontal axis.
Formation	Group – A pattern formed by the athletes' placement on the floor.
Free arm	The arm that is not holding the hand apparatus. The athlete must show a defined position with the free arm at all times.
Free roll	Hoop, ball – A roll of the apparatus without direction from the hands during the roll.
Free spin	Hoop – A spin without hand placement on the hoop during the spin.
Frontal plane	In front. (See Skills section for more information.)
Grand battement	Ballet – An exercise in which the working leg is raised from the hip into the air and brought down again. May be done to the front, side or back.
Hand apparatus	Rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon
Hitchkick	Dance – An aerial transfer of weight from one foot to the other with the legs lifted in an extended position. May be done to the front or back.
Hop	Dance – A jump beginning and landing on the same foot, with the free leg in a defined shape. (Examples: passé, arabesque.)
Horizontal axis	An imaginary line from side to side around which the apparatus rotates. (See Skills section for more information.)
Horizontal plane	Parallel to the floor. (See Skills section for more information.)
Identified skills	In compulsory routines, the main skills. These skills are listed in the <i>Official Special Olympics Rules</i> .
Jump	Dance – A spring from two feet landing on two feet, with the legs in a defined position. (Examples: straight, tuck, straddle.)
Leap (Grand jeté)	Ballet – A spring from one foot to the other with the legs in a defined shape. (Examples: split, stag, ring.)
Locomotor movements	Dance – Steps that travel across the floor. (Examples: walk, run, skip, chassé.)
Lunge	Body position – Standing with the support leg bent and the other leg extended to the back, side or front.
Mills	Clubs – Small windmill club circles in figure 8s, performed with the wrists close together. May be done vertical, horizontal or overhead.
Mixed grip	Hoop – Holding with one hand in an overgrip and one hand in an undergrip.



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Neutral deductions	Competition – Deductions taken by the judge at the end of the routine, such as out of bounds, coaching and apparatus/attire violations.
Optional routine	Competition – A routine with choreography and music that is individual to the athlete.
Outside grip	Hoop – A grip with the hands on opposite edges of the hoop.
Overgrip	Hoop – Holding the hoop with one or both hands facing down or toward the body.
Passé	Ballet – A movement in which the foot of the working leg is lifted to the knee of the supporting leg. May be either parallel or turned out.
Pike	Body position – Sitting, legs are together and extended.
Pilates	A cross-training method of body conditioning that combines stretching and strengthening exercises. Pilates was developed by Joseph Pilates.
Pivot	Body Skill – A turn performed on one foot.
Plié	Ballet – A bending of the knee or knees.
Port de bras	Ballet – Carriage of the arms.
Presentation	Competition – Raising one or both arms at the beginning and end of each routine to acknowledge the judge.
Relevé	Ballet – A position standing high on the balls of the feet and toes.
Reverance	Ballet – A combination done at the end of the ballet class.
Rond de jambe	Ballet – A circular movement of the leg: from the front, to the side, to the back, or reversed: from the back, to the side, to the front.
Rotations	Rope, hoop – The apparatus moves in a circular pattern.
Sagittal plane	On the side. (See Skills section for further information.)
Snakes	Ribbon – Small side-to-side (horizontal) or up-and-down (vertical) patterns performed from the wrist.
Sous-sus	Ballet – A relevé in fifth position, with one foot placed directly in front of the other foot.
Spirals	Ribbon – Small circular pattern performed from the wrist.
Split	Body position – On the floor or in the air during a jump/leap, position with a large separation of the legs. May be performed with one leg front and one leg back or in a straddle position.
Straddle	Body position – Legs are extended to the sides.
Swings	A smooth motion with the body, arms or apparatus. May be performed up, down, to the side, overhead and on any plane.
Synchronization	Group – All athletes performing a skill at the same time.
Tendu	Ballet - The working foot slides to a pointed position on the floor. May be done to the front, side or back.



Term	Definition
Tiptoe turn (Bourrée turn)	Ballet – A turn in place with many small steps in relevé.
Toss/throw	Apparatus – The athlete throws the apparatus into the air and, after a moment with no hand contact, catches the apparatus.
Trap	Catching the apparatus with a body part other than the hands.
Turnout	Ballet – The ability of the athlete to turn his/her feet and legs out from the hips.
Tuck	Body position – Legs are together and bent.
Undergrip	Hoop – Holding the hoop with one or both hands facing up or away from the body.
Wraps	Rope – The rope wraps around a part of the body.
Vertical axis	An imaginary line up and down, around which the athlete or apparatus rotates. (See Skills section for more information.)
Windmill arms	Dance – Large circles executed with the arms separated by 180°.