



***Special Olympics***

**RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS COACHING GUIDE**

Planning a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training &  
Competition Season



## Table of Contents

Goals	3
Benefits of Goal Setting	3
Goal Setting and Motivation	3
Essential Components of a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Session	6
Warming Up	6
Skills Instruction	6
Competition Experience	7
Cooling Down	8
Considerations for Training	9
Preparing for a Training Session	9
Your Training Plan	9
Equipment Setup	9
Principles of Effective Training Sessions	10
Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions	11
Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions	12
Nutrition	13
Guidelines for a Balanced Diet	13
Pre-Competition Meal/Nutrients	13
During Competition Nutrients	13
Post-Competition Nutrients	13
Hosting a Competition	14
Rhythmic Gymnastics Attire	16
Workout Attire	16
Competition Attire	16
Examples of Competition Attire	16
Rhythmic Gymnastics Equipment	20
Rope Specifications	20
Hoop Specifications	21
Ball Specifications	22
Clubs Specifications	23
Ribbon Specifications	24
Stick	25
Ribbon	25
Attachment of the ribbon to the stick	26
Floor Specifications	27



## Goals

Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Please see the Principles of Coaching section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

### Benefits of Goal Setting

- ♦ Allows the coach to measure the athletes' development and improvement
- ♦ Allows the coach to take a progressive approach to training
- ♦ Allows the coach to manage the training sessions more efficiently
- ♦ Teaches organization and time management for both coaches and athletes
- ♦ Gives the athletes clear expectations
- ♦ Puts the athletes' focus on personal achievement during training, rather than the outcome of the competition

### Goal Setting and Motivation

#### Developing Self-Confidence through Goal Setting

Accomplishing goals at practice in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence. The main features of goal setting include:

1. Goals should be set jointly by the coach and athlete.
  - ♦ Goals that seem realistic to the coach may seem unattainable to the athlete because of a lack of self-confidence. For example, you may feel the athlete can toss and catch the ball with one hand, while the athlete may not have the confidence to see that as a realistic goal. Perhaps set the goal of tossing with one hand and catching with two hands until the athlete has the confidence to try one hand catches.
2. Goals must be structured as short-term, intermediate and long-term.
  - ♦ At the beginning of the season, short term goals would be learning body and apparatus skills. Intermediate goals would be combining the apparatus skills with body movements in sequences from the competitive routines. Long-term goals would be perfecting routines and participating in competitions.
3. Goals should be viewed as stepping stones to success.
  - ♦ Break complex skills down into parts. Each part is a goal to be accomplished and praised. For example, if the athlete's goal is to jump three times consecutively over the turning rope, begin with jumps over the rope in a U-shape. Then, practice just the overhead swing. Finally, combine the swing with one jump over the rope. The athlete can add more jumps as he/she becomes more confident. By breaking the skill down into parts that the athlete can accomplish, you can make a seemingly unattainable goal become realistic with small stepping stones.
4. Goals should vary in difficulty — from easily attainable to challenging.
  - ♦ Athletes need to feel successful in each training session and competition. Set goals that are easy for them to reach, such as performing with a smile during the competition. Also, set more challenging goals, such as catching a high toss during the routine, keeping straight legs and pointed toes, or finishing the routine with the music.
5. Goals must be measurable.
  - ♦ Athletes need to have a tangible way to know when goals are attained. For example, when an athlete is learning tosses with the hoop, keep track of how many successful catches the athlete does in a training session. Set a goal to catch the hoop five times during each practice. When that goal is met, change the goal to ten catches. When the athlete has mastered the toss and catch, begin to work on consistency. Make the goal catching the hoop five times out of ten tosses, and finally five in a row.
6. Goals should be used to establish the athlete's training and competition plan.



Athletes with or without an intellectual disability may be more motivated by accomplishing short-term goals than long-term goals; however, do not be afraid to challenge athletes. Include athletes in setting their personal goals. There are participation factors that may influence motivation and goal setting:

- ♦ Age appropriateness
- ♦ Ability level
- ♦ Readiness level
- ♦ Athlete performance
- ♦ Family influence
- ♦ Peer influence
- ♦ Athlete preference

### Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals

Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is what the athlete controls. Outcomes are frequently controlled by others. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a competition because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win if all other athletes perform at a lower level. If an athlete's goal is to finish a routine with the music at a competition, the athlete has more control over achieving this goal than winning. This performance goal ultimately gives the athlete more control over her performance.

### Motivation through Goal Setting

Goal setting has proved to be one of the most simple and effective motivational devices developed for sport within the past three decades. While the concept is not new, today the techniques for effective goal setting have been refined and clarified. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance an athlete's motivation?

1. Provide more time and attention to an athlete when she is having difficulty learning a skill.
2. Reward small gains of achievement in skill level. Praise the athlete's effort toward improving skills.
3. Develop measures of achievement other than winning awards at competition.
4. Show your athletes that they are important to you.
5. Show your athletes that you are proud of them and excited about what they are doing.
6. Instill a sense of self-worth in your athletes.

Goals give direction. They tell us what needs to be accomplished. They increase effort, persistence and the quality of performance. Establishing goals also requires that the athlete and coach determine techniques for how to achieve those goals.

### Measurable and Specific

Effective goals are measurable and specific. Goals stated in the form of "I want to be the best that I can be!" or "I want to improve my performance!" are vague and difficult to measure. It is positive sounding but difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether these goals have been reached. To be realistic, measurable goals must establish a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks.

### Difficult, but Realistic

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is one perceived as difficult but attainable within a reasonable amount of time and with a reasonable amount of effort or ability. A threatening goal is one perceived as being beyond one's current capacity. Realistic implies that judgment is involved. Goals based upon a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks are likely to be realistic.



### Long- versus Short-Term Goals

Both long- and short-term goals provide direction, but short-term goals appear to have the greatest motivational effects. Short-term goals are more readily attainable and are stepping stones to more distant, long-term goals. Unrealistic short-term goals are easier to recognize than unrealistic long-term goals. Once they are identified, unrealistic goals can then be modified before valuable practice time has been lost.

### Positive versus Negative Goal Setting

Positive goals direct what to do rather than what not to do, whereas negative goals direct our attention too heavily to the errors we wish to avoid or eliminate. Positive goals also require coaches and athletes to decide how they will reach those specific goals. Once the goal is decided upon, the athlete and coach must determine specific strategies and techniques that allow the goal to be attained successfully. For example, a positive instruction is telling an athlete, “keep your legs straight,” whereas a negative instruction is telling an athlete, “don’t bend your knees.”

### Set Priorities

Effective goals are limited in number and meaningful to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important and fundamental for continued development. Establishing a few carefully selected goals also allows athletes and coaches to keep accurate records without becoming overwhelmed with record keeping.

### Mutual Goal Setting

Goal setting becomes an effective motivational device when athletes are committed to achieving those goals. When goals are imposed or established without significant input from the athletes, motivation is unlikely to be enhanced.

### Formal versus Informal Goal Setting

Some coaches and athletes think that goals must be set in formal meetings outside of practice and require long periods of thoughtful evaluation before they are decided upon. Goals are literally progressions that coaches have been using for years but are now expressed in measurable performance terms rather than as vague, generalized outcomes.

### Goal Setting Domains

When asked to set goals, athletes typically focus on the learning of new skills or performances in competitions. A major role of the coach is to broaden the athlete's perception of those areas, and goal setting can be an effective tool. Goals can be set to enhance fitness, improve attendance, promote sportsmanship, develop team spirit or establish consistency.

### Short-Term Objective

Learning rhythmic gymnastics in a fun environment

### Long-Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic rhythmic gymnastics skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in rhythmic gymnastics competitions.



## Essential Components of a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Session

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the facility, will help establish such a routine and help make the best use of your limited time. A basic training plan is outlined below.

### Warming Up

#### Aerobic Activity

Music is an integral part of rhythmic gymnastics, and the aerobic section of the warm-up is a good place to teach tempo and rhythm, timing, and moving to different types of music. By choosing dance or locomotor movements that relate to lively music, you can create an aerobic warm-up that will be fun for the athletes, as well as training for essential body skills. For a sample aerobic warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

#### Stretching

The stretching portion of the warm-up can also be done to music. Choose softer music with a slower tempo to encourage long, slow stretches. You can include graceful, flowing music to practice arm and body waves during this section of the warm-up. Use transitions between the exercises to make the stretching session flow. Be sure to include stretches for all parts of the body. For a sample stretching and body waves warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

### Skills Instruction

#### Body Skills

Rhythmic gymnastics body skills are divided into four categories: pivots/turns, jumps/leaps, balances and flexibilities. The body positions and technique are those used in classical ballet. It is the coach's responsibility to have a good, working knowledge of the dance elements in the routines, as well as progressions for teaching those elements with proper technique and body alignment.

#### Apparatus Technique

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. For each apparatus, there are basic skills specific to that apparatus. Teaching hints that will relate to all pieces of equipment are listed below:

- ◆ Coaches should practice new skills themselves before teaching the athletes. This is a good way to figure out appropriate ways to break the skill down into parts and to identify possible problems they might encounter in teaching the skill.
- ◆ When teaching apparatus skills, it is important to teach the skill correctly, with good technique, from the very first attempt. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make corrections in technique after the athlete has practiced incorrectly for several sessions. For example, when learning tosses, the athlete should focus not on the catch, but on tossing the apparatus with straight arms. When she can toss correctly with straight arms, her tosses will become consistent and the catches will be easy.
- ◆ Teach new skills in parts. First, demonstrate the complete skill. Then, break the skill down into parts and practice each part separately. For example, to learn straight jumps over the rope, the athlete must first practice swinging the rope overhead. She can also practice holding the rope in a U-shape and jumping over. Finally, in slow motion, she can swing the rope overhead to the U-shape, jump over and continue with another swing. Teaching in parts not only promotes good technique, but also allows the athlete to be successful when learning new skills.



## Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide

### Planning a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training & Competition Season

- ◆ Apparatus skills should be taught progressively. For example, the athlete must first learn to swing a hoop forward and backward in the sagittal plane before she can learn to toss the hoop. Likewise, she must be able to do consistently good tosses and catches, with correct technique, before she adds a body skill. The coach should choose skills that are appropriate to the level and ability of each athlete.
- ◆ When the athlete has mastered several skills with a piece of apparatus, the coach can introduce combinations. For example, with ball: toss and catch, roll in and out the arms, bounce and catch. If the athlete loses the technique when doing combinations, go back and practice each skill separately.
- ◆ Once correct technique has been learned, repetition is the key to mastery of a skill. Remember – perfect practice makes perfect!
- ◆ Creativity is important in rhythmic gymnastics, but can be detrimental if athletes are allowed to experiment on their own too much, practicing poor technique which could easily turn into bad habits.

#### Competition Experience

- ◆ Taking into consideration the length of the training period, as well as the abilities of each athlete, the coach must determine the level and number of routines an athlete is capable of learning and competing successfully.
- ◆ During each training session, the coach must choose appropriate activities in the process of teaching the competitive routines.
- ◆ Teach competitive routines in parts:
  1. Teach the presentation to the judge at the beginning and end of each routine as an integral part of the routine.
  2. Teach the identified skills. The athlete should learn the body skill and the apparatus skill separately before combining the two.
  3. Teach the identified skills within sequences from the routine, one section at a time.
  4. Combine the sections to practice the complete routine without music.
  5. If a television is available, play the DVD segment showing the version of the routine that is filmed from the back, and have the athletes follow.
  6. As a training aid, have the athletes practice the routine to the music that has vocal cues.
  7. Practice the routine with music.
  8. If possible, have a practice competition. The athletes should perform in competition attire before an audience. Regardless of whether the routines are being scored, someone should sit at a judges table and acknowledge the athletes as they present themselves before and after each routine.
- ◆ The ultimate goal is to train athletes to perform routines independently, but some athletes may need visual cues, especially in the first competition. Others may always need visual cues.
- ◆ If an athlete has physical disabilities that make a skill too difficult or impossible to perform, try to find a way to alter the skill so that the athlete can include it in the routine. Remember – there are deductions for changing the routine, but the athlete should have the opportunity to compete within her abilities.
- ◆ Teach the presentation to the judge as an integral part of each routine. The athlete should know how to acknowledge the judge, walk onto the floor and assume the beginning pose for each routine and with each piece of apparatus. The athlete should also practice the salute to the judge at the completion of each routine.





- ♦ In a competition, the judges will sit by Side 1 of the floor exercise mat. Refer to the Rules section of this guide for a diagram of the competition floor.
- ♦ Athletes should be dressed neatly in appropriate attire for competition. Long hair must be securely pulled back. Remember, the judge forms a first impression as the athlete walks onto the floor!
- ♦ Special Olympics regulations follow the current FIG rules for competition attire. At the coach's discretion, seated athletes are allowed to wear workout apparel for competition.
- ♦ The athlete's rhythmic apparatus should be color coordinated with the competition attire. Apparatus is available in many colors. Decorative tape may be added to the hoop and clubs. Ropes and ribbons may be dyed to show different colors.

### **Cooling Down**

#### **Strength and Conditioning Exercises**

The coach should determine appropriate strength and conditioning exercises based on the evaluation of the athlete's performance during training.

#### **Stretching**

Stretching at the end of a training session is a good way for athletes to cool down. This is a good time to talk about the day's practice, assign homework and plan for upcoming events.





## Considerations for Training

- ◆ When designing training sessions, consider the strengths and weaknesses of your athletes. Choose activities that allow your athletes to improve.
- ◆ Make training fun. Design training exercises that hold the athletes' attention. When practicing skills, do enough to improve technique, yet not so much as to bore your athletes.
- ◆ Keep your talking to a minimum. Short, concise instructions are better than long explanations.
- ◆ Be creative in developing skill progressions to meet unique needs of your athletes.
- ◆ When introducing new skills, continue to review fundamental technique.
- ◆ Introduce new skills early in the training session, when athletes are fresh and attentive.
- ◆ Above all, be organized.

## Preparing for a Training Session

### Your Training Plan

Organize your training plan progressively. During the first weeks of training, introduce and practice individual skills. Next, begin working on parts of the routines and finally practice full routines with music. Refer to the steps listed above for teaching competitive routines in parts.

### Equipment Setup

Before each training session, ensure that you have all apparatus, music and an adequate practice area prepared.



### Principles of Effective Training Sessions

<b>Keep all athletes active</b>	Athletes need to be active listeners
<b>Create clear, concise goals</b>	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them
<b>Give clear, concise instructions</b>	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction
<b>Give positive feedback</b>	Emphasize and reward the effort that the athletes put forth as well as skills they are doing well
<b>Provide variety</b>	Vary exercises – prevent boredom
<b>Encourage enjoyment</b>	Training and competition is fun – help keep it this way for you and your athletes
<b>Create progressions</b>	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known to unknown</li> <li>• Simple to complex</li> <li>• General to specific</li> </ul>
<b>Plan maximum use of resources</b>	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively
<b>Allow for individual differences</b>	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities



### Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions

- Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- Alter the plan to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- Change activities before the athletes become bored and lose interest.
- If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.



### Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of rhythmic gymnastics. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Rhythmic gymnastics is typically not a dangerous sport, but injuries do occur. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at the first training session, and enforce them.
  - Keep your hands to yourself.
  - Use rhythmic equipment for its intended purpose (not as a weapon).
  - Listen to the coach.
  - Ask the coach before you leave the practice area.
  - Respect other athletes' space.
2. Keep a fully stocked first aid kit with equipment; restock supplies as necessary.
3. Train all athletes and coaches in emergency procedures.
4. Review your first aid and emergency procedures. It is recommended to have someone who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on or very near to the facility during training and competition.
5. Check the facility and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are training in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that an athlete might run into.
6. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each training session to prevent muscle injuries. Cool down at the end of each training session.
7. Train to improve the general fitness level of your athletes. In addition to being able to perform better, physically fit athletes are not as prone to injury as athletes who are in poor physical condition.



## Nutrition

### Guidelines for a Balanced Diet

- ◆ Eat lots of different kinds of food – vegetables, fruits, fish, meats, dairy products and grains.
- ◆ Eat fresh food rather than ready prepared, canned or frozen foods.
- ◆ Eat a high proportion of complex carbohydrate-rich foods.
- ◆ Grill, steam or bake foods. Avoid boiling or frying.
- ◆ Avoid fatty meals and sweet and salty snacks.
- ◆ Check fiber intake by eating whole grain breads, cereals and pastas.
- ◆ Eat brown rice instead of white rice.
- ◆ Flavor food with herbs and spices, rather than salt.
- ◆ Drink small amounts of water and fruit juices often.

### Pre-Competition Meal/Nutrients

Your body's energy levels need to be high before training and competition. The high-performance diet above will supply this everyday requirement. Athletes are individuals and require different foods, and their body responds differently to certain foods. Generally speaking, the guidelines below will help your athletes consume the proper nutrients before competition.

- ◆ Eat a small, easily digestible meal, usually less than 900 calories.
- ◆ Eat about 2 ½-4 hours before competing.
- ◆ Limit proteins and fats since they digest slowly.
- ◆ Avoid foods which form gas in the digestive system.
- ◆ Drink small amounts of water often: before, during, and after competing.

### During Competition Nutrients

- ◆ Besides hydration, nutrients are not needed for events that last less than one hour.
- ◆ For events that have more than one hour of continuous activity, carbohydrate drinks or fruit will supply the needed energy for continued effort.
- ◆ During competitions lasting more than two hours, let your athletes nibble on small pieces of banana, peanut butter sandwiches, noodles or plain pasta (complex carbohydrates) when they have at least a half hour break before their next routine. Do not fast your athletes during a 6-8 hour event.

### Post-Competition Nutrients

- ◆ To replenish energy, foods with readily available carbohydrates (fruits, carbohydrate drink, granola bars) should be eaten in small amounts immediately after exercise.
- ◆ Throughout the remainder of the day, meals should contain 65% complex carbohydrates to replenish energy.



## Hosting a Competition

- ♦ Select a date, secure the venue and send out entry information to invited teams.
- ♦ Select judges and provide them with a copy of the official Special Olympics Rules, a DVD of the compulsory routines and the Judging Guidelines.
- ♦ On competition day, you should have the following technical staff:
  - Line judges positioned on opposite corners of the competition floor.
  - Music technician with copies of all compulsory music.
  - Announcer – Traditionally, each athlete is announced as he/she walks onto the floor for each routine.
  - Floor manager to assist with staging for the march-in and lining up the athletes in competition order.
  - Judges' secretary to do unofficial score tabulations at the judges table.
  - Scorekeeper.
  - Score flashers to display the competitors' scores.
  - Runners to take the score sheets from the judges table to the score keeper.
  - Timer to time optional routines.
  - Equipment measurer.
  - Medical staff.
  - Awards committee.
- ♦ On competition day, you should have at the venue:
  - A copy of the official Special Olympics Rules and Judging Guidelines.
  - Score sheets for each athlete, each routine – available in the official Special Olympics Rules or on GMS (Games Management System), custom reports you can request from SOI.
  - Copies of music for compulsory routines, all levels.
  - Protest forms.
  - Copies of the Body Skills Form for Level 4 athletes – available in the official Special Olympics Rules.
  - Copies of the Request for Equipment Modification Form – available in the official Special Olympics Rules.
  - Equipment measuring board.
  - Rotation sheets with the running order of competition.
  - Stop watch.
  - Awards.
- ♦ If you have one judge or one panel of judges, you will run one event at a time.
- ♦ If you have two panels of judges, two events can run at the same time, alternating events. For example: Panel 1 will judge a competitor with rope, and while they tabulate the score, Panel 2 will judge a competitor with hoop, and so on.
- ♦ Olympic order of events is: rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon.



## Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide

### Planning a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training & Competition Season

---

- ♦ When there are two days of competition, preliminaries and finals, the score from preliminaries will count as 25% of the total score, and the score from finals will count as 75% of the total score.
- ♦ When there are two days of competition, the athletes can be put into divisions (with athletes of similar abilities) based on the score achieved for each event in preliminaries.
- ♦ When there is one day of competition, the score achieved on each event on that day can be used to put athletes into divisions for awards or the competition management can request coaches to submit scores from a previous competition to be used in assigning divisions.



## Rhythmic Gymnastics Attire

Discuss with parents/guardians and athletes the types of attire that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. For the safety of the gymnast, no jewelry is allowed in training or competition.

### Workout Attire

For training, athletes need to wear clothes which will allow them to move freely. Leotards are appropriate and may be worn with footless tights or bike shorts. Warm-up pants and a fitted t-shirt are fine for male and female athletes. Long hair should be pulled back securely in a ponytail or bun. Athletes should not wear jewelry, with the exception of stud earrings in pierced ears. Athletes may practice in bare feet, socks, gymnastics shoes or rhythmic half-slippers.

### Competition Attire

For competition, athletes who compete in Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 should wear a leotard or unitard.

- ♦ Long tights (down to the ankle) may be worn under the leotard.
- ♦ Skirted leotards, with the skirt no longer than upper thigh, are acceptable.
- ♦ Leotards may be with or without sleeves, but dance leotards with narrow straps and a low cut back are not allowed.
- ♦ The cut of the leotard at the top of the legs must not go beyond the fold of the crotch (maximum).
- ♦ Any decoration added to the leotard, either loose or stuck to the garment (flowers, ribbons, etc.) must adhere to the leotard.
- ♦ Leotards must be non-transparent material. Lace or other sheer fabric should be lined in the area of the trunk.
- ♦ Bare feet, gymnastics slippers or rhythmic half-slippers (recommended) are acceptable.
- ♦ Hairstyles should be neat.

Athletes who compete in Levels A and B may wear warm-up pants and t-shirts.

Refer to the Special Olympics Rules for all regulations concerning the athlete's attire.

### Examples of Competition Attire

Rhythmic shoes







Leotard



Skirted leotard



Unitard





Attire for Seated Athletes



Hair in a ponytail



Short hair pulled back





Hair in a bun

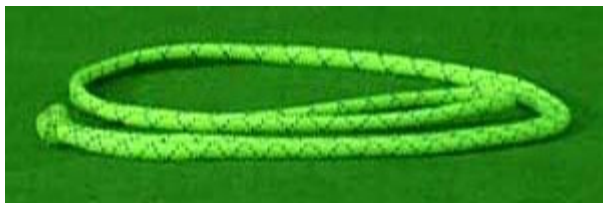




## Rhythmic Gymnastics Equipment

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. Below, you will find the required dimensions for each apparatus. Athletes may use smaller apparatus as a training aid, but in competition, all apparatus must be the correct size. (Note - there is a form to complete if your athlete has a disability that necessitates their using equipment that does not meet Special Olympics specifications). 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.

### Rope Specifications



#### Material

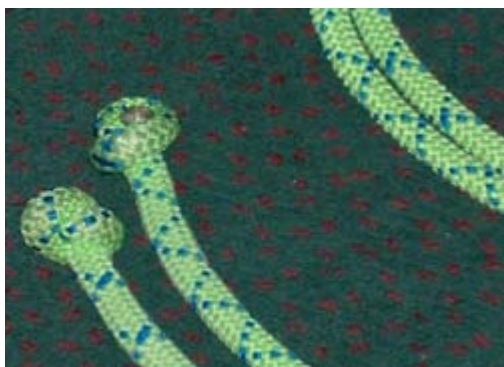
The rope may be of hemp or synthetic material, provided that it possesses the identical qualities of lightness and suppleness as rope made of hemp.

#### Length

The length should be proportionate to the size of the gymnast.

#### 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.



#### Shape

The rope may be either of a uniform diameter or progressively thicker in the center, provided that this thickness is of the same material as the rope.

#### Color

The rope may be any color or combinations of colors.



How to select the appropriate size rope for your athlete

Holding one knot in each hand, the athlete stands on the middle of the rope. The knots should come up to her armpits.



### Hoop Specifications



#### 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.

#### Diameter

The interior diameter of the hoop should be 60-90 centimeters.

#### Weight

A minimum of 150-300 grams and up.

#### 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.

#### Color

The hoop may be any color or combination of colors. The hoop may be partially or fully covered with tape to add colors.



### How to select the appropriate size hoop for your athlete

Find a hoop that the athlete can pass through and handle easily. Generally when the hoop is placed at the athlete's side, the upper rim will come to her hip.

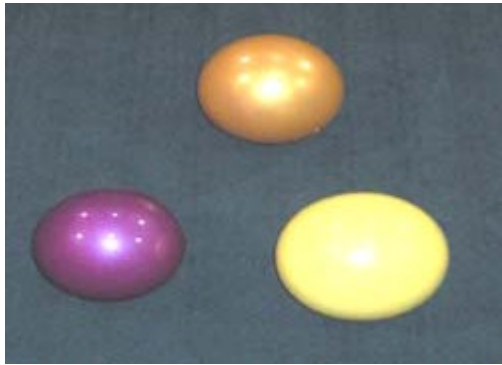


### Ball Specifications



### Material

The ball may be made of rubber or synthetic material (pliable plastic), provided that the latter possesses the same elasticity as rubber.



#### Diameter

14-20 centimeters.

#### Color

The ball may be of any color.

#### How to select the appropriate size ball for your athlete

Find a ball that the athlete can hold without gripping and catch easily.

#### Clubs Specifications



#### Material

The clubs may be made of wood or synthetic material.

#### Length

Each club is 40 to 50 centimeters from one end to the other.

#### 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. The head has a maximum diameter of 3 centimeters. The head may be replaced by an enlargement of the end of the neck. An anti-slip material may cover the head, provided that the diameter for this part remains at the regulatory specification of 3 centimeters. The neck and the body of the club can also be covered with adhesive tape.





### Color

The clubs may be of a neutral color or may be colored (all or partially) with one or several colors.



### How to select the appropriate size clubs for your athlete

Find clubs that are shorter than the distance between the athlete's wrist and shoulder.

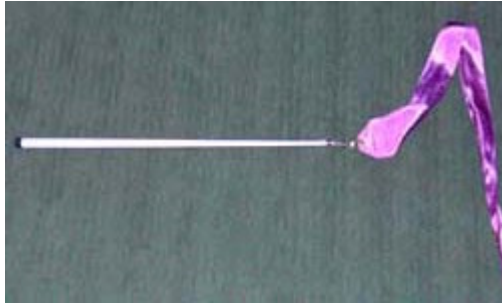
### Ribbon Specifications







### Stick



#### Material

Wood, bamboo, plastic, fiberglass.

#### Diameter

A maximum of 1 centimeter at its widest part.

#### Shape

Cylindrical or conical, or a combination of the two shapes.

#### 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:

- ♦ A supple strap (string or nylon) held in place by a nylon thread wound around the stick for a maximum of 5 centimeters.
- ♦ A metal ring fixed directly onto the stick.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ A metal ring (fixed, mobile or pivoting) or a supple strap fixed to a metal tip of no more than 3 centimeters.
- ♦ 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.

#### Color

Any choice.

### Ribbon

#### Material

Satin or similar non-starched material.

#### Color

Any choice of a single color, two colors or multicolored.



#### Width

4-6 centimeters.

#### Length

From one end to the other, the finished length of the ribbon should be a minimum of 3 meters to a maximum of 6 meters. This part must be in one piece.

- ♦ The end that 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.
- ♦ 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.

#### Attachment of the ribbon to the stick

- ♦ The ribbon is fixed to the stick by means of a supple attachment, such as thread, nylon cord or a series of articulated rings.
- ♦ 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).



#### How to select the appropriate size ribbon stick for your athlete

When the athlete holds the ribbon stick down to her side, it should not touch the floor.

#### How to select the appropriate size ribbon for your athlete

Find a ribbon that the athlete can use to perform the patterns easily, without knots.



## Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide

### Planning a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training & Competition Season

---

#### **Floor Specifications**

13 meters by 13 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 feet 3 inches), but should be fairly high.